



THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF GREEK AND ROMAN WARFARE

Volume II: Rome from the Late Republic to the Late Empire

EDITED BY PHILIP SABIN, HANS VAN WEES AND MICHAEL WHITEBY



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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF GREEK AND ROMAN WARFARE

Warfare was the single biggest preoccupation of historians in antiquity. In recent decades fresh textual interpretations, numerous new archaeological discoveries and a much broader analytical focus emphasizing social, economic, political and cultural approaches have transformed our understanding of ancient warfare. Volume II of this two-volume *History* reflects these developments and provides a systematic account, written by a distinguished cast of contributors, of the various themes underlying the warfare of the Roman world from the late Republic to the sixth-century Empire of Justinian and his successors. For each broad period developments in troop types, equipment, strategy and tactics are discussed. These are placed in the broader context of developments in international relations and the relationship of warfare to both the state and wider society. Numerous illustrations, a glossary and chronology, and information about the ancient authors mentioned supplement the text. This will become the primary reference work for specialists and non-specialists alike.

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VOLUME II

Rome from the late Republic to the late Empire

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EDITORS' PREFACE

Warfare was the single biggest preoccupation of historians in antiquity, but modern academic interest in the subject has revived only in the last few decades. The narrowly focused studies of war written before the First World War by Delbrück, Kromayer, Veith and others have now been superseded by a much wider spectrum of work, ranging from the individual soldier's experience of battle to the place of ancient warfare within wider social, economic, political and cultural structures. Partly as a result of this broader focus, and partly through richer textual analysis and a flood of new archaeological discoveries, our understanding of ancient warfare has been transformed.

With the exception of popular survey works, however, there is no comprehensive overview of this burgeoning field of study. The *Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* aims to fill this gap: its two volumes survey the advances made since the 1970s in all aspects of research on ancient warfare, and provide an opportunity for a distinguished group of experts in the field to take the subject further still by presenting an array of new ideas and suggesting many new directions. Our aim in this work is not to provide a narrative account of the countless wars which took place across a period spanning fifteen centuries – such accounts are readily available from any number of other sources, not least the *Cambridge Ancient History* – but to offer a thematic analysis of the main aspects of warfare in the ancient world.

Three important introductory chapters set the scene: the first puts the present volumes in their historiographical context and explains further the rationale for their publication; the other two address the nature of evidence and the problems of its interpretation, two issues which are fundamental to a new and better understanding of ancient warfare. The bulk of the volumes is divided into four chronologically ordered parts, each covering a span of three or four centuries. These chronological divisions serve to draw attention to the broad changes which occurred in warfare and the societies in which this warfare was practised and pursued. Detailed chronological tables at the end of each volume also help readers to place the discussion in its proper historical frame. The first part of volume 1 covers the earliest

centuries of Greek society, which generated our most famous accounts of ancient warfare, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as well as 'proper' historical accounts of conflicts, with Thucydides' record of the Peloponnesian War often regarded as the acme of ancient historiography. In the second part, early Rome and the Hellenistic world are dealt with in parallel, a rather unusual combination designed to stimulate a fresh analytical perspective and to overcome the common tendency to keep the Greek and Roman worlds in entirely separate compartments. The first part of the second volume bridges one of the great political transitions of the ancient world, that from the Roman Republic to the Principate of Augustus and his successors, with the intention of highlighting continuing issues and recurrent themes. The final part deals with the later Empire, a period long seen through the prism of 'decline and fall' but one in which most scholars now identify a robust and protracted defence of imperial interests in a world which was experiencing profound changes, internally through the adoption of Christianity and externally through the arrival of the Huns.

Within each chronological part, the subdivisions are thematic and reflect the key aspects of ancient warfare identified in modern historiography: (1) the role of war and peace in international relations; (2) the nature, composition and status of different kinds of armed forces; (3) the practicalities and ethics of the conduct of wars and campaigns; (4) the nature and experience of combat in pitched battles and sieges; (5) the political and economic dimensions of war; and (6) the social and cultural dimensions of war. The same sub-divisions are applied in each of the four parts, so as to enable readers to make comparisons and to pursue particular themes throughout antiquity.

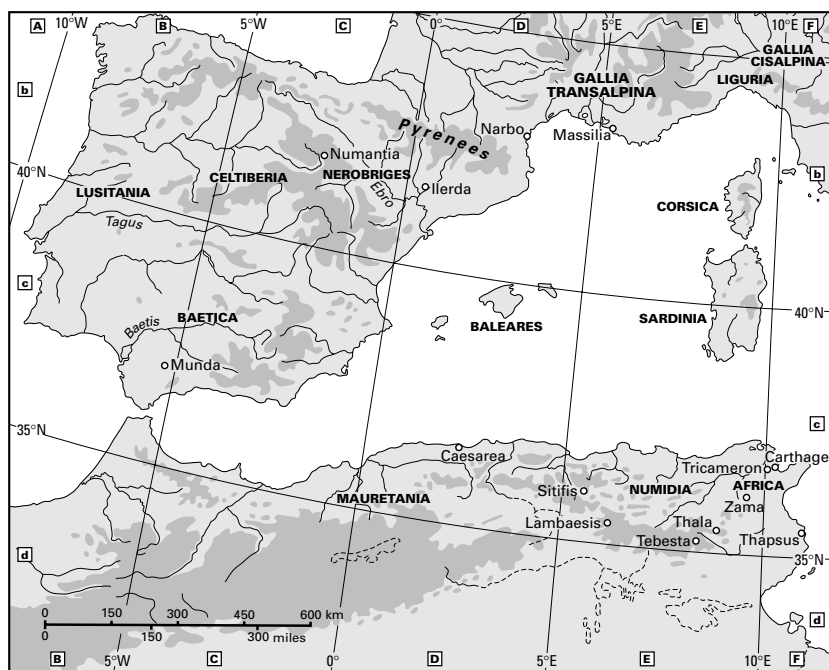
'War is terrible', said Polybius, 'but not so terrible that we should put up with *anything* to avoid it' (4.31.3). These volumes examine both the forms taken by the terror of war in the ancient world and the forces which all too often made it seem necessary to resort to violence at the cost of giving up 'the thing which we all pray that the gods may give us . . . the only incontestable blessing among the so-called good things in life – I mean peace' (4.74.3).

Philip Sabin
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Michael Whitby

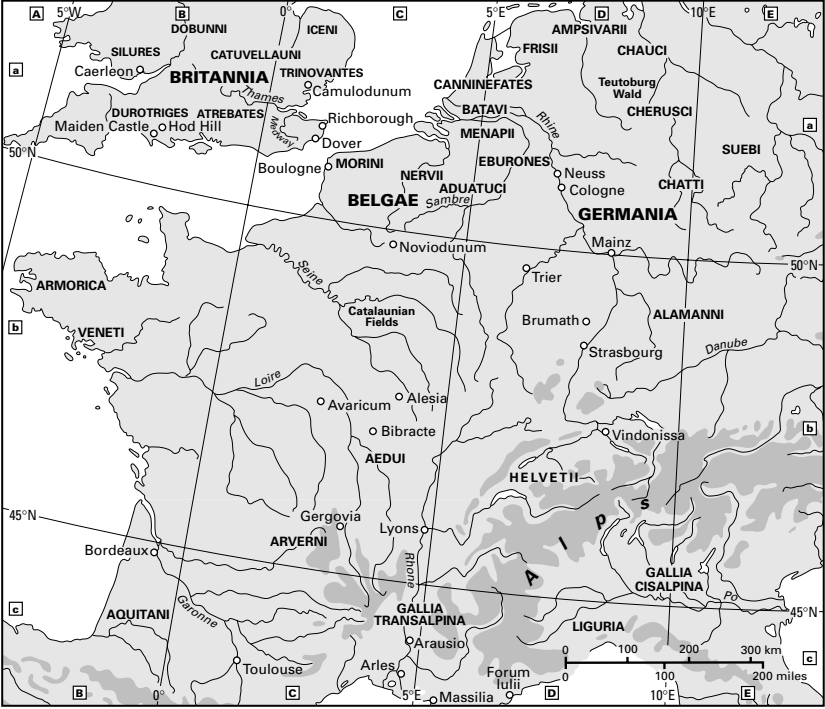
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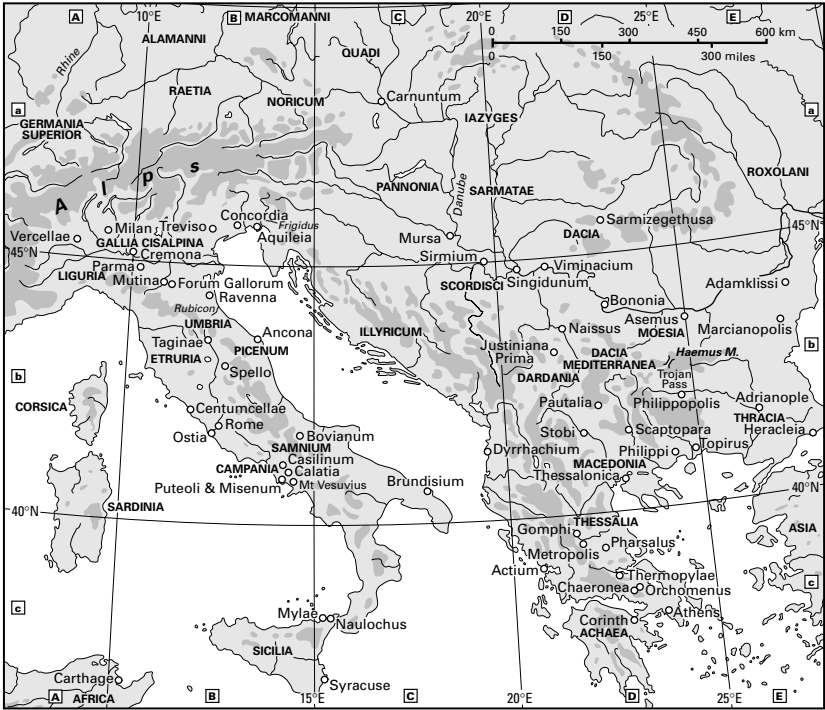
The inspiration for these volumes came from Pauline Hire, former classics editor at Cambridge University Press, and we are very grateful for her help and advice in the early stages of this work. Thanks are also due to Ashley Clements for his careful subeditorial work and to Hilary Scannell, Alison Powell, Michael Sharp and Sinead Moloney for their many and varied contributions in bringing this project to completion. We also wish to thank Barbara Hird for her work in producing the indexes.



Map 1. Spain and Africa.



Map 2. Gaul and Germany.



Map 3. Italy and the Balkans.



Map 4. The east.



Map 5. Roman Britain.



Map 6. The provinces under Trajan.

PART I

THE LATE REPUBLIC AND THE PRINCIPATE

CHAPTER 1

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

HARRY SIDEBOTTOM

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of Roman international relations and attitudes to war and peace in the late Republic and the Principate poses fascinating problems. While there are many excellent modern studies of specific aspects there are few scholarly works which attempt an overview.¹ In part this may be because no Greek or Latin literature of the period discussed these themes in an extended or systematic fashion. A modern appreciation has to draw on material scattered in literary, epigraphic, papyrological, numismatic and artistic sources.

It is vital not to elevate what have become, since the Renaissance,² the norms of Western diplomacy to the status of universal practices and attitudes. We have to 'forget about' or, at least, question the existence in Rome of various things which we tend to regard as timeless: diplomatic archives and experts, topographical maps, continuity of relations between states (permanent embassies and the like) and proactive policies, even coherent and explicit policies at all. The preconditions which underpinned the emergence of the Western norms (a multiplicity of stable polities which recognized their broadly comparable levels of political power and cultural attainment) did not exist for Rome in this period. As we shall see, Roman ways of thinking about the Roman empire and its neighbours largely precluded the creation of structures similar to those of the post-Renaissance West.

To understand Roman international relations we must first look at the ideological frameworks within which they operated.

II. IDEOLOGY: EMPIRE AND OUTSIDE

Three logically incompatible views of the empire were available to its inhabitants. It encompassed the whole world, the best areas of the world or just part of the world.

¹ Millar (1982), (1988) and Mattern (1999) are general studies of diplomacy. Braund (1984) contains much of use. Shaw (1986) and Talbert (1988) provide specific studies. Bederman (2001) is the latest in a line of over-legalistic studies. For modern works on war and peace see section x below.

² Mattingly (1955).

Jupiter in Virgil's *Aeneid* famously promised the Romans 'empire without end'.³ The idea that the Romans had conquered the whole world was not confined only to poetry. Philo described the Romans ruling over all the earth and sea.⁴ This view was bolstered by Roman conceptions of the nature of their empire. It ran where Roman power ran. It did not just consist of provinces directly administered by Rome, but also of 'client' states.⁵ The Romans had strong expectations about how the ruler of a 'client' state should behave.⁶ He should control his subjects, not intrigue with peoples hostile to Rome, not harm other Roman 'clients' or Roman provinces and if they were wanted he should provide troops and material for Roman campaigns. If he fulfilled these expectations Rome would probably support his rule. If he were very favoured, Rome would approve his choice of successor. There was always a tendency for Rome to try and absorb 'client' states into provinces, especially in the east. The process, however, was not all one way. Some 'provincialized' peoples were given back to 'client' rulers. It would be wrong to talk of an abandonment of the client system. The Romans always attempted to turn the peoples beyond their provinces into 'client' states. The feeling that 'client' states were part of the empire was supported by the language and practice of Roman diplomacy. Subject peoples, on any objective view inside the empire, were called allies (*socii*), with whom Rome had friendship (*amicitia*) and with whom Rome observed diplomatic protocol. The same terms and forms were employed with 'client' peoples to our eyes outside the empire.⁷ Furthermore from the early second century BC the Romans, like the imperial Chinese, could consider any diplomatic approach by another people as evidence of their submission to Rome.⁸

The second, to us rather more plausible, view was expressed distinctively by Greeks within the empire. The Romans held all the earth that was worth having and maybe a bit more besides.⁹ This was compatible with the belief that the empire was hedged round with strong defences (e.g. Aristid. *Or.* 26.81–2).

The third view, in contrast, saw imperial expansion as inherently glorious and to be continued.¹⁰ This was often expressed as regret for missed opportunities. The whole world would have fallen if Julius Caesar had not been forced to abandon his Gallic campaigns (Dio Cass. 44.43.1). Again

³ Virg. *Aen.* 1.278–9; cf. 6.781–2; and Ov. *Fast.* 2.688.

⁴ Philo, *Leg.* 8; cf. the heading of Augustus, *Res Gestae*; Plin. *HN* 3.5; Dio Cass. 73.24.2.

⁵ Richardson (1991); Lintott (1993) 22–44.

⁶ Luttwak (1976) 20–40; Braund (1984); Millar (1993).

⁷ Millar (1988) 352–6. The archive wall at Aphrodisias preserves the most illuminating dossier of imperial correspondence to an 'allied' city within the empire: Reynolds (1982).

⁸ E.g. Augustus, *Res Gestae* 26–33; Suet. *Aug.* 21.3; Badian (1958) 8–9 on early second-century change. This ideology makes a Roman embassy to China unlikely: Campbell (1989) 373 n. 21; Peyrefitte (1989) on Chinese attitudes.

⁹ Whittaker (2000) 299.

¹⁰ Brunt (1990b) 96–109, 288–323, 433–80.

the emperor Maximinus Thrax would have reached the Ocean if not for a revolt (Herodian 7.2.9). Or it could all be put down to the inertia of some emperors.¹¹

The Romans seem incurious about the realities of the world outside. We hear of only a handful of official expeditions gathering information beyond the empire,¹² and it was thought that increased geographic conquest would normally bring knowledge.¹³ It appears that the Romans tended to think not in terms of blocks of territory ('cartographic thinking') but in the linear terms ('odological thinking') of coasts, rivers, roads or mountain ranges.¹⁴ The products of this 'odological thinking' were written and pictured itineraries (lists of towns and stopping places along roads) and *periploi* (lists of ports of call for coastal voyaging).¹⁵ It seems that it was these, rather than topographical maps, that were employed in strategic thinking (*SHA Alex. Sev.* 45.2–3). The east with its urban centres linked by roads and with the Rivers Euphrates and Tigris flowing away from the empire was thus easier to comprehend than the unurbanized north.¹⁶

'Map consciousness' and geographic knowledge in general may have been low but they could affect thinking about interstate relations. The inhabited world was thought to stretch twice as far east–west as north–south, with the northern coast of Europe considered a straight line.¹⁷ Such ideas underlie Agricola contemplating an invasion of Ireland because it was 'halfway between Britain and Spain' (Tac. *Agr.* 24), and Herodian's complaint that the Romans concentrated on the northern frontier at the expense of the eastern because the Germans were virtually adjacent neighbours to the Italians (6.7.5).

The frontier of the empire could be seen as a moral barrier.¹⁸ Inside were the arts, discipline and humanity (*humanitas*). Outside were wildness, irrationality, savagery and barbarity (*barbaritas*).¹⁹ In large measure the identity of a civilized member of the empire consisted in being the opposite of a barbarian. But there were tensions and ambiguities in Roman thinking. It was recognized that barbarians were not all the same. Those in the north were generally stupider but more ferocious than those in the east.²⁰ Some barbarians, northern or eastern, could be thought of as good and wise. Dio Chrysostom wrote up the Dacians as natural philosophers.²¹

¹¹ E.g. Tac. *Ann.* 4.32; Flor. 1 *praefatio.* 8; Herodian 1.6.7–9.

¹² Rawson (1985) 256–7; Austin and Rankov (1995) 30–1.

¹³ Millar (1982) 18; cf. Sherk (1974) 534–62 and, a more positive view, Syme (1988).

¹⁴ A view pioneered by Janni (1984); followed by Lee (1993b) 86–90 and Brodersen (2001) 7–21. See Nicolet (1991) for a different view.

¹⁵ Brodersen (1995); cf. Salway (2001) 22–66. ¹⁶ Lee (1993b) 87–90.

¹⁷ Mattern (1999) 41–66. ¹⁸ Alföldi (1952) 1–16.

¹⁹ Woolf (1998) 54–60 for an overview; Ferris (2000) for these ideas in art.

²⁰ Balsdon (1979) 59–64.

²¹ Sidebottom (1990) 180–204 on Dio; Momigliano (1975) on the phenomenon in general.

There was a tension between established traditions about barbarians and new information. Cassius Dio (67.6.2, cf. 69.15.1) called the Dacians by that name as it was what they called themselves, although he was aware that some Greek writers called them Getae (as had Dio Chrysostom), the name of a tribe known to the Greeks in classical antiquity.

From some stances the barrier could almost vanish. Some whole peoples in the empire could be portrayed as barbarous, as Herodian did the Phoenicians (5.3.3–8, 5.5.3–10).²² Indeed, the non-élite, whatever their ethnicity, could be seen as being like barbarians.²³

Ludicrous as such ethnic stereotyping appears to us, it shaped Roman diplomacy. One of the two reasons Marcus Aurelius sent away empty handed an embassy of the lazyges was that 'he knew their race to be untrustworthy' (Dio Cass. 72.13.1).

III. DECISION MAKING: GOVERNMENT AT ROME

Under the Republic the legal ratification of war and peace depended on a vote of an assembly of the Roman people.²⁴ Diplomacy, however, was the preserve of the Senate, which both received and sent embassies.²⁵ As Polybius commented (6.13.7–8), this could lead foreigners to assume that the Senate was the sole government of Rome. The strength of feeling, at least among senators, that the Senate as a body should conduct interstate relations is shown by the outrage generated when popular politicians (such as Tiberius Gracchus and Publius Clodius) removed it from the process.²⁶ Individual senators could have important unofficial roles to play. As patrons they were expected to further the diplomacy of their foreign clients, and when abroad they might stay with kings.²⁷ Some kings kept agents in Rome, and legislation embodied justifiable fears that senators might be bribed.²⁸ Conversely some senators loaned money to kings.²⁹

Under the Principate this all changed. Now the emperor was the ultimate decision maker. He was expected to consult a body of advisors (his *consilium*). But the *consilium* was an informal group consisting of whomever he chose to invite and he could overrule its opinion.³⁰ Embassies now went to and from the emperor. Only once under the Principate, in AD 24, do we hear of the Senate receiving and sending an embassy (Tac. *Ann.* 4.26). Yet there was an expectation that the Senate should have a role, if only a

²² Cf. Dio Cass. 79.27.1 on Moors. ²³ Shaw (2000) 375–6.

²⁴ Lintott (1999) 197, 201; it may be that the Senate took over these functions in the late Republic.

²⁵ Millar (1988) 340, 367.

²⁶ Stockton (1979) 67–9 for Tiberius Gracchus; Braund (1984) 24 for Clodius.

²⁷ Badian (1958) 154–67; Braund (1984) 16.

²⁸ Badian (1968) 64; Braund (1984) 59–60; Austin and Rankov (1995) 93.

²⁹ Braund (1984) 59–61. ³⁰ Crook (1955).



Figure 1.1 Coin depicting Trajan presenting a Dacian to a senator.

formal one, in diplomacy. In 23 BC Augustus introduced eastern envoys to the Senate, which referred the matter back to him (Dio Cass. 53.33.1–2).³¹ The expectation of senatorial involvement is made clear by a coin depicting Trajan presenting a Dacian to a senator³² (see fig. 1.1).

We last hear of an embassy being presented to the Senate in the reign of Commodus.³³ We can thus assume special pleading when in the early third century AD the senator Cassius Dio, in a programmatic speech, argued that foreign envoys should be taken before the Senate (53.31.1).

It was always customary for the emperor to inform the Senate of his diplomatic activity. Marcus Aurelius sent details of all his treaties except that with the Iazyges, when Avidius Cassius' revolt forced him to make peace against his will (Dio Cass. 72.17.1). After foreign envoys no longer appeared before the Senate emperors continued to send details of their diplomacy. In AD 218 Macrinus was criticized for sending an edited version of his treaty with Parthia (Dio Cass. 79.27.1–3).

As from the start the emperor had the legal right to make war or peace;³⁴ the role of the people was confined to that of spectators at diplomatic spectacles (see below, section VIII).

The transition from Republic to Principate brought changes in the types of individuals who unofficially mattered in diplomacy. The new order is revealed in the terms of a will made by Herod, king of Judaea. He left 1,000 talents to Augustus and half that sum to be divided between Augustus' wife Livia, the imperial children, imperial friends (*amici*) and imperial freedmen.³⁵ The great senatorial houses, which under the Republic had acted as patrons for foreign rulers (e.g. the Gracchi and the Attalids of Pergamum) were no longer central: indeed as Tacitus (*Ann.* 3.55)

³¹ Talbert (1984) 420. ³² BMC vol. III, p. 65, no. 244, plate 13.14; Talbert (1984) 428.

³³ Talbert (1988) 137–47. ³⁴ Talbert (1984) 429.

³⁵ Joseph. *BJ* 1.646; *AJ* 17.146. Under the Principate individuals other than the emperor could only act as patrons to communities within the empire; see Eilers (2002) on Greek cities

makes clear, such contacts could bring senators into danger from suspicious emperors.

It is debatable how informed the level of diplomatic discussion was in the emperor's *consilium*.³⁶ As we have seen, the *consilium* was an informal body to which the emperor could invite whomever he wished. We do not hear of invitations to specialists on foreign affairs in specific areas or in general. Again there is no trace of an imperial secretary devoted to foreign affairs. Treaties with foreign powers were recorded (see below, section ix) and clearly some archives existed for such matters as grants of Roman citizenship.³⁷ Yet evidence for any archive devoted to diplomatic affairs remains elusive. Without accurate topographical maps diplomatic debate must have been conducted in terms of the prevailing 'odological thinking' about geography and ethnographic understanding (see above, section ii). It has been pointed out that Cassius Dio was an imperial advisor as well as historian. Debate in the emperor's *consilium* thus might be judged to have been at the same vague level as it was in Cassius Dio's history.³⁸ Yet this could be to ignore the conventions of ancient literary genres. As Cassius Dio's contemporary, Herodian, states (2.15.6–7), works of history should not get bogged down in superfluous detail. Debate which led to decision making in foreign affairs may have been rather more precise than its reflection in literary works, but it still should not be thought of as producing a sophisticated grand strategy close to modern versions.³⁹

IV. DECISION MAKING: DISTANCE AND TIME

Given the huge size of the empire, factors of distance and time determined how closely central government could control the diplomatic activities of its governors on the frontiers. A glance at a modern topographical map of the empire would suggest that the interior lines of communication offered by sea travel would have been utilized. Yet this was not the norm. Even though there were fleets stationed in the Mediterranean during the Principate,⁴⁰ they do not seem to have been used regularly for official communications.⁴¹ On occasions we find emperors using merchant shipping (Dio Cass. 65.9.2a). Sea travel was largely seasonal and often dangerous. Probably more important, it was highly unpredictable.⁴² A death sentence

³⁶ Millar (1982), (1988) are fundamental.

³⁷ Millar (1988) 359–61; Ando (2000) 80–130 gives a thorough discussion of archives within the empire, but does not address foreign diplomacy.

³⁸ Millar (1982) 3.

³⁹ The view of Luttwak (1976) that the Romans did produce a rational grand strategy comparable to modern ones has found few followers: Ferrill (1991b); Wheeler (1993). Against: Mann (1979); Millar (1982); Whittaker (1996); Mattern (1999).

⁴⁰ Starr (1941); Reddé (1986). ⁴¹ Millar (1982) 10–11.

⁴² Duncan-Jones (1990) 7–29; cf. Horden and Purcell (2000) 137–43, 564–6.

from Caligula in Rome for the governor of Syria was three months en route, arriving twenty-seven days after news of the emperor's death (Joseph. *Bj* 2.203; *AJ* 18.305).

The relative reliability of land communication was the preferred option. Augustus is said to have introduced a system of runners (Suet. *Aug.* 49), but if it was ever implemented it was soon abandoned. The Principate relied on the imperial post (*cursus publicus*), a system where those with official authorization (*diplomata*) could requisition horses and vehicles from either private sources or official posting stations (*mansiones*).⁴³ It has been estimated that the average speed of this system was about 50 miles a day, although for urgent messages it could have managed up to 160 miles a day.⁴⁴

In the Roman world diplomacy could be thought of as an activity requiring speed. It was a literary cliché that diplomatic letters hurried to their recipient,⁴⁵ But to our eyes diplomacy was often conducted in a leisurely way. Although Trajan had clearly announced his intentions of campaigning against Parthia and raised new legions for the war, it was not until he reached Athens that Parthian envoys came to him, and then he prevaricated, saying he would do all that was proper when he reached Syria (Dio Cass. 68.17.2–3).

The sometimes leisurely nature of diplomacy can be accounted for by the nature of ancient warfare. It was both seasonal, rarely being conducted in the winter, and slow-moving, ancient armies usually only moving at a speed of about 15 miles a day.⁴⁶ There was often no need for diplomacy to hurry. Time delays could be turned to Roman advantage. A governor of Moesia Inferior told an embassy of the Carpi to come back in four months for an answer to give him time to consult Gordian III.⁴⁷

V. DECISION MAKING: GOVERNORS ON THE FRONTIERS

Under the Republic Rome had a measure of control over its governors on the frontiers. Customarily it was the Senate which assigned provinces to senatorial magistrates or ex-magistrates, and decided the level of their funding and the numbers of troops. The Senate debated any treaties entered into by governors, and ultimately the people voted on decisions of war and peace. Governors could be tried on their return to Rome and in the late Republic laws attempted to govern their behaviour.⁴⁸

⁴³ Casson (1974) 182–90; Kolb (2001) 95–105. ⁴⁴ Ramsay (1925) 63–5.

⁴⁵ E.g. Juv. 4.147–9; cf. Herodian 6.2.1, 6.2.3, 6.7.2–3.

⁴⁶ Lee (1993b) 90–101, seasonal; Luttwak (1976) 80–4, slow moving.

⁴⁷ Petrus Patricius (Peter the Patrician), fr. 8 (*FHG* iv.186–7); Millar (1982) 11.

⁴⁸ Lintott (1993) 43–50, 97–107.

In the middle Republic, although levels of control varied, the general consensus among the senatorial élite and between it and the people meant that the system worked well; governors seldom did things which were disapproved of at home.⁴⁹ Things were often different in the late Republic. While it was ever more invoked, consensus both among the élite and between the élite and the people to some extent failed. From within the Senate emerged popular politicians (the *populares*) who distinctively ignored it and appealed direct to the people and at times intervened in foreign affairs.⁵⁰ Connected to this, and in part caused by the huge size of the empire, a special type of command was instituted, covering a wide geographic area and capable of remaining for several years in force.⁵¹ As a result the Senate had little control over some of the great dynasts in the last century BC. The process can be well illustrated from the career of Pompey. *Populares* tribunes of the plebs persuaded the people to vote Pompey special commands against the pirates (in 67 BC) and Mithridates (in 66 BC). After his defeat of Mithridates, Pompey created two new provinces (Syria and Pontus) and greatly enlarged another one (Cilicia) as well as making treaties with a large number of 'client' states. On his return to Rome in 62 BC Pompey demanded that all his actions be put to just one vote in the Senate. This extraordinary demand provoked furious opposition but, after Pompey had entered into the political friendship (*amicitia*) with Julius Caesar and Crassus known to modern historians as the first triumvirate, it was forced through in 59 BC.⁵²

Under the Principate all governors, whether notionally appointed by the Senate or acting as deputies (legates) of the emperor, acted to some extent under the auspices of the emperor.⁵³ It seems that from the beginning of the Principate all governors on taking up their posts received instructions (*mandata*) from the emperor.⁵⁴ Modern opinion is divided as to whether these soon ossified into a formulaic pattern⁵⁵ or they continued to contain specific instructions.⁵⁶ Whichever was the case, governors might receive specific instructions during their term. Tiberius sent Vitellius, his governor of Syria, detailed instructions on making a treaty with the king of Parthia (Joseph. *AJ* 18.96–105). Sometimes governors are seen asking for guidance before acting. Paetus, the governor of Syria, wrote to Vespasian, possibly with false information, before acting against Antiochus of Commagene (Joseph. *BJ* 7.219–44). Lack of imperial instructions made a good excuse for inactivity. Corbulo refused to invade Armenia without orders (Tac. *Ann.* 15.17). Arrangements that a governor made with a foreign power were only provisional until the emperor's later decision. Even Paetus' agreement with

⁴⁹ Eckstein (1987) xxi, 319–20.

⁵⁰ Wirszubski (1950) 39–40.

⁵¹ Wirszubski (1950) 61–5.

⁵² Seager (1979) 50–5, 72–87.

⁵³ Millar (1992) 313–28.

⁵⁴ Millar (1992) 314–17, 642–3; Burton (1976) 63.

⁵⁵ Millar (1982) 8–9.

⁵⁶ Potter (1996) 49–66.

the Parthians that no Roman should enter Armenia, a thing so disgraceful that Tacitus assumes it was invented to blacken Paetus, depended on Nero's acceptance.⁵⁷ At times governors merely acted as conduits to the emperor. Pliny as governor of Bithynia–Pontus did not accede to a procurator's request to hold up an embassy to Trajan from the king of Pontus.⁵⁸

Sometimes governors are presented as acting on their own initiative. Tacitus thus portrays the actions of his father-in-law as governor of Britain.⁵⁹ An inscription celebrating the achievements of Tiberius Plautius Silvanus records him as governor of Moesia, among other things, bringing kings previously unknown to the Romans to do reverence to the Roman standards, accepting hostages and deterring a king of the Scythians from hostile actions.⁶⁰ But to take these at face value might be to be misled by the rhetoric. They vaunt the achievements of their subjects and seek to place them in the tradition of Republican governors. To include instructions from an emperor would be to undercut these aims. Governors were aware that they had less freedom of action than their Republican predecessors. Corbulo, on being recalled from a campaign against the Chauci, famously exclaimed 'how fortunate were the Roman commanders of old' (Tac. *Ann.* 11.19–20; Dio Cass. 61.30.4–5). Making war without the emperor's permission carried the death penalty.⁶¹

It may be that any attempt to find the normal level of independent action of governors is doomed to failure. Several variable factors would determine a governor's independence: the perceived importance of an issue, the more important being referred straight to the emperor, the less so being dealt with initially by the governor; the pressing nature of the issue, the more pressing being more likely to be handled at once by the governor; the governor's own desire for independent action; and finally the governor's perception of the character of the emperor and relationship with him.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

In Roman eyes it should have been barbarians who initiated diplomatic activity. Part of Sulla's good fortune was held to be that he was the first Roman approached by a Parthian envoy (Plut. *Vit. Sull.* 5.4). Especially in wartime it was considered an act of weakness to start negotiations. Herodian

⁵⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 15.16. Presumably treaties made by the emperor's legates only became valid 'as if passed by the Senate and people' (Dio Cass. 60.23.6) after imperial endorsement.

⁵⁸ Plin. *Ep.* 10.63, 64, 67. As with Paetus and Antiochus above, this reminds us that central government only knew what it was told, and at times its agents told it different things.

⁵⁹ Tac. *Agr.*; Millar (1982) 9.

⁶⁰ *ILS* 986; translated in Sherck (1988) no. 64; discussed by Millar (1982) 7–8 and Mattern (1999) 162–3.

⁶¹ *Dig.* 48.4.3; Talbert (1984) 428.

strongly disapproved of the attempts of Alexander Severus to deal with Persian aggression by diplomacy.⁶²

Romans thought that barbarian envoys should be of high status. It was part of Decebalus' arrogance that it was only after a defeat that his envoys were high-status 'cap-wearers' rather than the lower-status 'long-haired men' previously sent (Dio Cass. 68.9.1). In envoys from the north rank could matter more than age or sex. A king of the Senones was accompanied by Veleda, a virgin priestess (Dio Cass. 67.5.3), and an embassy came to Marcus in Pannonia headed by a twelve-year-old boy (Dio Cass. 72.11.1).

Best of all, the barbarian rulers should come in person. On one occasion no fewer than eleven kings came to the governor of Pannonia to make peace (Dio Cass. 63.3.1a; cf. *ILS* 986). Leaving a realm behind to go on an embassy, perhaps protracted, was dangerous for a ruler. In an inscription the king of Bosphorus thanks a town in his realm for not revolting while he was in Rome.⁶³ The barbarian envoy should be accompanied by a large entourage. Three thousand horsemen as well as various royal princes followed Tiridates to Nero (Dio Cass. 63.1.1–2.2; cf. Herodian 6.4.4–6).

Barbarian embassies travelling through the empire were supervised. A papyrus from Dura-Europus includes a command from the governor of Syria ordering the reception of a Parthian envoy as he passed through the frontier forts.⁶⁴ Envoys from Vologeses to Nero were escorted by a centurion (Tac. *Ann.* 15.24–5). Such arrangements were in part practical. An escort guided an Ethiopian embassy which did not know how to find Augustus.⁶⁵ Yet such escorts also served both to honour the embassy and symbolically to control it. It is significant that Vologeses wanted an assurance that his brother would be allowed to embrace Roman governors and not be kept waiting at their doors (Tac. *Ann.* 15.31).

The expenses of an embassy in Roman territory seem to have been met by Rome. Such was the case with the embassy mentioned in the Dura-Europus papyrus (above). At the top end of the scale Tiridates and his entourage cost the Roman treasury 800,000 sesterces a day (Dio Cass. 63.2.2). When in Rome embassies under the Republic were put up in the Villa Publica on the Campus Martius or in a house provided by the Senate. Under the Principate lodgings in Rome were provided by the emperor and a special building was set aside in camps outside Rome.⁶⁶

At Rome envoys were given seats of honour in the theatre. Augustus is said to have forbidden this on learning that some ambassadors were ex-slaves (Suet. *Aug.* 44). The ban had lapsed by the time of Claudius when some German envoys, seeing Parthian and Armenian envoys seated among

⁶² Herodian 6.2.3, 6.4.4; Sidebottom (1998) 2810–11 on his attitude to Alexander Severus in general.

⁶³ Braund (1984) 56. ⁶⁴ *P Dur.* 60 = *PNR* 98; Austin and Rankov (1995) 171.

⁶⁵ Strabo 17.820–1; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 14.25, guard; Dio Cass. 68.20.4, prevent troublemaking.

⁶⁶ Platner and Ashby (1929) 581; Braund (1984) 10–11; Millar (1988) 370.

the senators, went to join them on the grounds they were just as brave and noble (Suet. *Claud.* 25; Tac. *Ann.* 13.54).

Senators, although they thought themselves at least the equal of foreign kings, served on embassies under the Republic.⁶⁷ In the Principate no king was considered the equal of the emperor.⁶⁸ As subordinates foreign rulers should come to the emperor. This had both a practical and symbolic element. The treacherous capture of Crassus by the Parthians was a lesson Valerian had failed to heed when the Sasanids took him prisoner (by underhand means, according to Greek and Latin sources).⁶⁹ Vologeses, repeatedly summoned by Nero, suggested that the Roman travel to Asia (Dio Cass. 63.7.2).

The prevailing ideology meant that most communication from the emperor to foreign powers could be sent back with their embassies. When that was not the case practice varied. If the diplomatic meeting was to be held within or on the borders of Roman territory, and in the presence of Roman forces, the emperor would send representatives of high status. To meet the Parthian king the imperial prince Gaius Caesar was sent by Augustus (Vell. Pat. 2.101–2), and the governor of Syria Vitellius by Tiberius (Joseph. *AJ* 18.101–5). A different practice seems to have been followed if the Roman envoys had to put themselves into the power of the other side. We hear of a few individuals sent: an imperial secretary to a tribe in the north (Dio Cass. 72.12.3), the son of a governor, rather than the governor as requested, to the king of Armenia (Dio Cass. 68.19.1–2) and a centurion to the king of Adiabene (Dio Cass. 68.2.3). As far as a pattern emerges it appears they were never of the highest status. Possibly this was a strategy to keep barbarians in their place.

Like the emperors Roman governors expected foreign powers to come to them. One Longinus was foolish enough to visit Decebalus, taking with him a centurion and a freedman. They were held as bargaining counters. Longinus retrieved the situation via suicide (Dio Cass. 68.12.1–5). Diplomatic meetings between the leaders of three peoples of the middle Atlas and the Roman governor of Mauretania Tingitana were held at the provincial capital, where a series of extant inscriptions was set up as a record.⁷⁰ When a governor wished to send people into the territory of the other side we find Corbulo in the east using centurions (Tac. *Ann.* 15.5 and 15.27) and on one occasion an equestrian officer and the young son of a senator (Tac. *Ann.* 15.28). Again those sent were not of the highest status.

Just as there were no permanent legations in Rome so the Romans never maintained a permanent diplomatic presence elsewhere. On an *ad hoc* basis

⁶⁷ Rawson (1975) 148–59.

⁶⁸ E.g. Suet. *Calig.* 22; see section VIII below, on the rare equality of a Parthian/Sasanid ruler.

⁶⁹ Sherwin-White (1984) 279–90, on Crassus; Potter (1990) 331–7, on Valerian.

⁷⁰ Shaw (1986) 66–89.

Roman troops might be sent to support a client king.⁷¹ We are told that Augustus appointed regents for kings who were unable to rule because of youth or insanity.⁷² The practice is never heard of subsequently. Very rarely individuals are found posted among barbarians: a centurion among the Marcomanni (Dio Cass. 73.2.4), another near the Caspian gates (*AE* 1951.265) and an individual 'with the Garamantes'.⁷³

The languages employed in diplomacy would have varied. Herodian imagines that one of the initial reasons for the Parthian king to reject Caracalla's proposal to his daughter was that they could not speak each other's language (4.10.5). It was not an insuperable difficulty. In the east Greek would have been the *lingua franca*. The Hellenized Roman élite and members of the Parthian court would normally have both spoken Greek. Greek remained an official language under the Sasanid Persians.⁷⁴ An interpreter recorded south of Damascus probably dealt with locals who spoke Aramaic.⁷⁵

The case was different on other frontiers. Cultural prejudice would have inhibited many élite Romans from learning languages other than Greek, although both Sertorius and Decimus Brutus knew some Celtic.⁷⁶ Inscriptions from the northern frontiers reveal several military interpreters, one of whom could speak Dacian.⁷⁷ Interpreters would not always have been necessary even in the north. Some tribal leaders would have learnt Latin either as hostages (Suet. *Calig.* 45; Tac. *Ag.* 21) or when serving as auxiliaries in the Roman army (Tac. *Ann.* 2.9–10, 2.13). When Trajan was campaigning against the Dacians a large mushroom was brought to him from some allied tribes with a message written on it in Latin (Dio Cass. 68.8.1).

VII. CONTENT: RELIGION

It is a truism that religion and politics could not be separated in ancient Rome.⁷⁸ This was never more the case than in interstate relations. The Romans believed that early on they had established these on a sound footing with the gods. Livy credits the third and fourth mythical kings of Rome with the setting up of the rituals of a college of priests composed of senators (the *fetiales*) who oversaw the making of treaties and the declaration of war.⁷⁹ Last heard of in the third century AD⁸⁰ it is uncertain how continuous

⁷¹ Braund (1984) 94; Austin and Rankov (1995) 148–9.

⁷² Suet. *Aug.* 48. One example of each is known: Tac. *Ann.* 2.67; Dio Cass. 57.17.5

⁷³ Austin and Rankov (1995) 189.

⁷⁴ Millar (1988) 364–5; an Indian embassy carried a letter in Greek: Strabo 15.719.

⁷⁵ Cf. Millar (1988) 372.

⁷⁶ Plut. *Vit. Sert.* 3.2; App. *B Civ.* 3.97.404–7; cf. Ovid's claims to know Getic, *Pont.* 4.13.17–38.

⁷⁷ Austin and Rankov (1995) 28–9. ⁷⁸ Beard and Crawford (1985) 25–39.

⁷⁹ Livy 1.24, 1.32.6–14; Beard, North and Price (1998); see index under *fetiales*. ⁸⁰ *AE* 1948.241.

was the existence of the *fetiales*; yet their rituals were distinctive of Roman thinking.

In what was believed to be the original form of declaring war the rituals involved the *fetiales* making three trips to the enemy: first demanding reparations, then issuing a formal warning and finally a formal declaration of war. With the growth of the empire these were slimmed down to a demand for reparations followed by a formal declaration of war carried out at Rome.⁸¹ The demand for reparations does imply that the other side were perceived to have done a wrong to Rome, but not that Rome or an ally had necessarily been attacked. The whole process should be thought of as putting the issue before a tribunal of the gods, which would give its verdict in the outcome of the war. If Rome won the gods approved of Roman actions and the war was a just war.⁸²

In the late Republic Rome's belief in its pre-eminence probably precluded sending *fetiales* out to make treaties. Foreign embassies which came to Rome were seen by the Senate. If the response of that body was favourable the envoys would be escorted to the Capitol where they would be allowed to make sacrifices and offer dedications. Decrees recognizing kings would be deposited in the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.⁸³ The practices continued into the Principate. We hear of British chiefs making offerings on the Capitol (Strabo 4.200) and a king of Iberia making sacrifices there (Dio Cass. 69.15.3). Augustus ruled that when the Senate discussed war and peace it should meet in the temple of Mars Ultor.⁸⁴

When Tiridates of Armenia appeared before Nero in Rome he was allowed to express his subordination in his own religious terms. He referred to Nero as Mithras and himself as a slave (Dio Cass. 62.5.2). Usually Roman sensitivities discouraged envoys from overt worship of the emperor as a god in Rome. In the provinces, however, envoys were much encouraged to worship the standards of the Roman legions, which included portraits of the emperor (Tac. *Ann.* 15.29; Dio Cass. 62.23.3). Client kings in the east, but seemingly not elsewhere, were active in the imperial cult.⁸⁵ The inscriptions from Volubis recording the meetings of governors and native chiefs, which usually start with an invocation to the god(s) and end with a reference to the setting up of an altar, show that all diplomatic activity was structured by religion.⁸⁶

Diplomacy itself could be conducted at a supernatural level. A ritual existed (*evocatio*) to encourage the gods of its enemies to come over to Rome. The last evidence we have of this practice dates to 75 BC.⁸⁷ Thereafter supernatural diplomacy appears to move from the category of religion to

⁸¹ Serv., *In Verg. comm.* (Virgil commentary) 9.52.

⁸² Barnes (1986); on 'just war' see pp. 25–8 below.

⁸³ Braund (1984) 24–7.

⁸⁴ Talbert (1984) 427.

⁸⁵ Suet. *Aug.* 60; Braund (1984) 112–15.

⁸⁶ Shaw (1986) 7.

⁸⁷ Beard, North and Price (1998) 133–4.

that of superstition. As part of meddling in forbidden things bad emperors could be accused of using magic to influence foreign affairs. Elagabalus is said to have tried to cause war with the Marcomanni by these means (SHA *Heliogab.* 9.1–2; cf. *Marc.* 13.1–2). The Alamanni claimed that they had used charms to drive Caracalla insane (Dio Cass. 78.15.2).

Treachery and underhand dealings in diplomacy were an offence to the gods. When a chief of the Chatti offered to poison Arminius Tiberius invoked the example of the plan to poison Pyrrhus and announced that Romans took vengeance via arms not underhand tricks (Tac. *Ann.* 2.88). It was considered a rare bad deed by Marcus to put a price on the head of a Marcomannic chief (Dio Cass. 72.14.1–2).

Envoys were sacrosanct and the Romans claimed to detest any wrongdoing to them (Diod. Sic. 76.15). Treachery was seen as a barbarian trait (see above, section II). For Romans prevarication was acceptable (Dio Cass. 68.17.2–3; *FHG* IV.186–7) but treachery was not. Caesar makes great efforts to explain away his seizure of a deputation from the Usipetes and Teneteri (*B Gall.* 4.11–13), and Cato tried to have him handed over to the enemy for his behaviour (Plut. *Vit. Cat. Min.* 51). Treachery was seen as a sign of a bad emperor. Domitian executed envoys from the Quadi and Marcomanni.⁸⁸

VIII. CONTENT: SYMBOLISM

Diplomacy was, and is, a deeply symbolic activity. Ancient historians are now prepared to think seriously about symbolism, and accept that it cannot be separated from the realities of diplomacy.⁸⁹ Yet after listing the Parthian king's requests for outward honours to be shown to his brother Tiridates during his journey to Rome, Tacitus comments that Vologeses did not understand that Romans valued real power but disdained its trappings (*Ann.* 15.31). This should not be taken at face value. Tacitus has just recounted with approval Tiridates' questions and Corbulo's explanations of the time-honoured externals of Roman power (*Ann.* 15.30). The new disjunction between reality and outward appearance in Rome caused by the Principate is a key theme in Tacitus' text.⁹⁰

The spatial setting of diplomacy was very important. As we have seen (above, section VII), under the Republic envoys were received by the Senate and then conducted up to the Capitol, and the practice continued under the Principate. Envoys were presented to the Senate by the emperor in the temple of Apollo and the temple of Mars Ultor, or came before the emperor who was seated on a tribunal in the Forum with the Senate and others in

⁸⁸ Dio Cass. 67.7.1; cf. Caracalla and Alamanni, Dio Cass. 78.13.5, and Parthians, Herodian 4.10.1–11.9.

⁸⁹ Sidebottom (forthcoming a).

⁹⁰ Pelling (1993); O'Gorman (2000) 46–77 provide stimulating discussions of aspects of this.



Figure 1.2 Engraved relief from the Boscoreale cup depicting Augustus, seated on a folding chair on a dais with soldiers and a lictor in attendance, receiving a kneeling delegation.

attendance.⁹¹ Envoys were exhibited to the people at the spectacles where, at times, some of them were given, or took, seats of honour.⁹²

If the emperor was not in Rome envoys could be conducted to him in the centre of his camp where he would be seated on a tribunal.⁹³ Outside a camp a meeting could be held on an open plain (Dio Cass. 68.30.3) or at a river: on the banks, an island or a bridge (*ILS* 986; Dio Cass. 62.22.2). These places were chosen partly with the practical aim of avoiding an ambush. But they could also have symbolic evocations. Corbulo met Tiridates at the site of a recent battle (Dio Cass. 62.25.1–2). Rivers were not only conceptual barriers between the empire and outside, but were also considered realms of gods.⁹⁴

The crowd had a role in diplomatic space. The Roman principal actor should be supported by an entourage including advisors (*amici*), ceremonial attendants (lictors) and troops. This is well illustrated in two images of barbarians before an emperor. One of the Boscoreale cups depicts Augustus seated on a folding chair on a raised dais backed by soldiers and with a lictor to his right hand⁹⁵ (see fig. 1.2).

⁹¹ Temple of Apollo, Joseph. *BJ* 2.81; *AJ* 17.301; Mars Ultor, Suet. *Aug.* 21.2; 29.1–2; Augustus, *Res Gestae* 29; Forum, Dio Cass. 59.12.2, 61.32, 44; Joseph. *AJ* 19.275; Suet. *Claud.* 25.

⁹² Joseph. *AJ* 14.210; Tac. *Ann.* 13.54; Suet. *Claud.* 25; Dio Cass. 68.15.2.

⁹³ Centre of camp, *Suda* Γ 336; tribunal, Dio Cass. 68.19.2.

⁹⁴ Braund (1996) 43–7.

⁹⁵ Kleiner (1992) 152–4; Kuttner (1995); Ferris (2000) 51–3.



Figure 1.3 Relief from the arch of Marcus Aurelius in Rome depicting Marcus Aurelius, seated on a pedestal with standards, soldiers and an advisor in attendance, listening to a request.

A relief from the arch of Marcus Aurelius shows the emperor (whose features were later resculpted to resemble those of Constantine) again seated on a raised pedestal with troops and standards in attendance and an imperial advisor behind the emperor⁹⁶ (see fig. 1.3).

Care was taken in the placing of the entourage. Aurelian arranged to receive an embassy from the Juthungi while seated on a tribunal with mounted commanders around him and his army on parade. The intent was to instil fear in the other side.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Hannestad (1988) 226–36, esp. 231; Kleiner (1992) 289–91; Ferris (2000) 98–9.

⁹⁷ Dexippus, *FGrH* 100 F 6; Millar (1982) 15; cf. Septimius Severus at Dio Cass. 77.14.3–4. Spatial arrangements were thought to matter to the other side, e.g. Plut. *Vit. Sull.* 5.

Roman diplomacy always aimed to give an impression of immediacy and openness. While the outcome might already be known, either to both sides (as with Tiridates and Nero) or only to the Romans (as with Parthamasiris and Trajan, below), the fiction that a decision would be made at the meeting was maintained. Sometimes, as with some Jewish envoys before Augustus (Joseph. *AJ* 16.335–55; cf. Dio Cass. 69.15.2–3), the Roman decision really was formulated on the spot. Diplomacy should be conducted in plain sight of the gods and men (Tac. *Ann.* 15.29). But if Roman women were to play a part it would make the other side aware of Roman weakness (Dio Cass. 61.3.3–4; cf. 61.33.7). Secret negotiations were activities for barbarians and bad Romans. When Parthamasiris asked to speak to Trajan away from the crowd the request was granted, but he was then required to say what he wanted in public (Dio Cass. 68.19.5–20.2). Caracalla was said to have privately instructed envoys from the northern barbarians to invade Italy if anything should happen to him. To keep this secret only interpreters were allowed at the meetings and they were subsequently killed (Dio Cass. 78.6.1–3).

Symbolic actions were important. Ideally the barbarians should express their submission by kneeling, as on the Boscoreale cup. It was bad if a barbarian's attitude expressed contumacious pride. Scene 75 on Trajan's column depicts the end of the first Dacian War⁹⁸ (see fig. 1.4). All the Dacians have the appropriate submissive poses except for Decebalus on the right of the scene who stands upright, his unrepentant bearing pointing to the need to fight him again.

Conversely the Romans could admire a certain courageous yet respectful pride in a defeated barbarian. Caratacus spoke boldly before Claudius and won a pardon.⁹⁹ The ideology of the defeated but noble barbarian was expressed on the arch of Marcus Aurelius in the depiction of the wounded barbarian chief helped to stand by his son. A hand gesture shows his submission as he calmly waits for Marcus to read out the terms of peace.

The Roman should be calm (as in figs. 1.1–4) but alert (as Josephus depicts Augustus questioning Jewish envoys, *AJ* 16.335–53). If the barbarians are suitably submissive, the Roman should exercise clemency (*clementia*), expressed by the open-handed gesture of Augustus on the Boscoreale cup. It was vital that the Romans should not lose face, but it was good if the barbarians did. When the Roman crowd gave the customary shout fear made Tiridates temporarily speechless (Dio Cass. 72.5.1) and Parthamasiris try to run away (Dio Cass. 78.19.4–5).

The other side, of course, might interpret Roman actions in a different way. Ironically it is Latin and Greek authors who preserve anecdotes of

⁹⁸ Hannestad (1988) 154–67, at 161–2; Kleiner (1992) 212–20.

⁹⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 12.36–7; Dio Cass. 61.33.3; cf. 61.32.4a.



Figure 1.4 Relief from Trajan's column depicting the conclusion of the First Dacian War, with the Dacians submitting to Roman authority, except for the upright Decebalus.

Roman arrogance in a diplomatic setting, such as Julius Caesar seizing the heir to the Numidian throne by the beard (Suet. *Iul.* 71).

Gift-giving was a vital element in diplomacy. Under the Republic it was not unknown for foreign rulers to offer symbolic gifts to Rome (e.g. Polyb. 32.1.3), but their gift-giving usually consisted of giving money to individual senators. This, of course, could often be interpreted as bribery. A striking type of gift confined to the late Republic was when a king left his realm to Rome in his will. The motivation behind this is uncertain: it was possibly to deter conspirators in his lifetime, or to protect his kingdom from local aggression after his death, or to spare his subjects the turmoil of a succession struggle or even conquest by Rome.¹⁰⁰ Such gifts caused problems at Rome. This was not because Rome in general was reluctant to annex territories,¹⁰¹ but because the Senate was reluctant to let some within its ranks gain the prestige, clients and capital which would accrue to anyone who set up a new province.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Braund (1984) 129–36, 144–55.

¹⁰¹ Pace Badian (1958), (1968); Sherwin-White (1984).

¹⁰² Harris (1979); North (1981) 1–9.

Under the Principate symbolic gifts tended to go to the emperor, and these were either costly or bizarre.¹⁰³ Among Parthian gifts to Tiberius was a Jew 7 cubits tall (Joseph. *AJ* 18.103). Trajan was given a horse which did obeisance (Dio Cass. 68.18.2). Augustus received from India some snakes, a tortoise and a partridge, all of huge size, and a man born with no arms (Strabo 15.719). We should not assume that Romans found such gifts a source of humour, as we do when Western heads of state receive odd gifts. The emperor's own subjects sent him much the same. Augustus was presented with a talking crow, and the palace contained a triton which had been presented.¹⁰⁴ Such wonderful and abnormal things were considered suitable to give to the emperor as he was the ultimate mediator between mankind and the supernatural.¹⁰⁵ Refusal of gifts was an option, as when Trajan refused those offered by a Parthian embassy (Dio Cass. 68.17.3), and was intended as a mark of displeasure and a deliberate snub.

From at least the late third century BC Roman gifts, while they might include artefacts in precious metal, which demonstrated both the wealth and the technological skill of the empire (e.g. Livy 43.5.8; Tac. *Germ.* 5), primarily consisted of marks of Roman status (on subsidies, see section IX below). Under the Republic these could take the form of the symbols of a Roman cavalry officer, magistrate, consul or holder of a triumph, and could evoke the trappings of the early kings of Rome.¹⁰⁶ Under the Principate these types gradually disappeared, the last known being the symbols of a praetor to Agrippa II of Judaea in AD 75. Probably from the time of Julius Caesar they began to be replaced by grants of Roman citizenship.¹⁰⁷ Such gifts at one level honoured their recipients, but at another enmeshed them in the Roman system, symbolizing their subordination to Rome. Cicero, while jeering at Antiochus of Commagene's possession of the toga of a Roman magistrate, made it clear that what Rome gave it could take away (*Q Fr.* 2.12.2–3). As we will see, ultimately Romans considered that their greatest gift to foreign kings was their very kingship. Augustus' gift to the Parthian king of a beautiful Italian slavegirl seems exceptional (see section below IX).

Embassies from different peoples were treated differently. Some Romans at some times could accept that their great eastern neighbour (Parthia, then Sasanid Persia) was the equal of the Roman empire. This is implicit in the arguments Herodian gives Caracalla when proposing to the king of Parthia's daughter.¹⁰⁸ But more usually they were seen as just another client

¹⁰³ See the examples collected by Friedlander (1928) IV.12–17.

¹⁰⁴ Macrobi. *Sat.* 2.4.29, crow; Paus. 9.21.1, triton. ¹⁰⁵ Price (1984) 234–48.

¹⁰⁶ Rawson (1975) 155–6; Braund (1984) 27–9. ¹⁰⁷ Braund (1984) 39–53.

¹⁰⁸ 10.1–11.9; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.13; Dio Cass. 40.14.3, 66.17.3; Strabo 2.92; Just. *Epit.* (Trogus) 41.1.1.

people. This was how Augustus dealt with them ideologically in the *Res Gestae* (33), and how Trajan attempted to deal with them in practical terms (Dio Cass. 68.30.3).

This ambiguity made Parthian and Sasanid Persian monarchs a special case. No Roman emperor met them face to face until the capture of Valerian.¹⁰⁹ The arrangement whereby the Parthian king chose the king of Armenia before formal investiture by Rome was unique.¹¹⁰ Parthian envoys were given prestigious seats at Roman spectacles. But it is indicative that they shared this honour with Armenian envoys, whom they could consider their own vassals (Suet. *Claud.* 25). Although Parthia was unusual, it would be a mistake to look for a rigid hierarchy in Rome's treatment of foreign powers.¹¹¹ They were treated differently, but on an *ad hoc* basis. Marcus varied his treatment of envoys from foreign peoples depending on how they were behaving at the time (Dio Cass. 72.19.1–2).

Diplomacy was not primarily seen as an arena of cultural cross-over. Romans and Parthians knew enough of the other's culture to tender insults by withholding titles in correspondence (Dio Cass. 55.10.20). Romans could make allowances for some 'otherness', such as Tiridates' wife being allowed to ride and wear a helmet as a veil (Dio Cass. 62.2.3). But this seems to have just made the other side exotic. Tiridates performing feats of arms with a bow and arrows during a gladiatorial show (Dio Cass. 62.3.2), or the son of an eastern king performing a barbarian dance before Trajan at a banquet (Dio Cass. 68.21.3), show that such exoticism merely served to symbolize the width of Roman power, much like displaying exotic animals at the spectacles.¹¹²

When cultural artifacts were thought to come to Rome via diplomacy, it was bad. Hostage kings taught Caligula to be a tyrant (Dio Cass. 59.24.1). Tiridates' visit introduced eastern magic to Rome (Plin. *HN* 30.16–18). Caracalla attempted to win over the Germans by dressing in German clothing and a blond wig (Herodian 4.7.3–4). Attitudes to cultural exchange on the other side could vary. Despite some kings boasting of Roman citizenship, and using various artifacts to express their vision of their place in a wider Roman world,¹¹³ some natives clearly disliked such cultural borrowings. Diplomatic hostages in the Roman empire were sometimes taught Latin,¹¹⁴ but evidence of Romanization could be held against them when they returned home (Tac. *Ann.* 2.4, 11.16; cf. 2.56). An unsuccessful pretender sent from Rome, Meherdates, was denounced as no Parthian king but an alien Roman. Parthian clemency allowed him to live, but cut off his ears (Tac. *Ann.* 12.14).

¹⁰⁹ See section XI below. ¹¹⁰ Campbell (1993) 228–32; Mattern (1999) 176–8.

¹¹¹ Pace Gagé (1959) 221–60.

¹¹² Cf. Suet. *Aug.* 43, juxtaposition of hostages and animals.

¹¹³ Creighton (2000), on Britain.

¹¹⁴ Suet. *Calig.* 45; Tac. *Ag.* 21.

IX. CONTENT: PRACTICALITIES

One special kind of gift or loan was the giving of hostages.¹¹⁵ In the late Republic and Principate, with a couple of possible exceptions,¹¹⁶ the traffic was all from the barbarians to Rome. Hostages were thought important to keep barbarians to their word. Tiberius instructed a governor only to put faith in a treaty if the Parthian king gave hostages, especially his son (Joseph. *AJ* 18.96). Augustus is said to have made innovations by demanding women as hostages and allowing replacements to be sent.¹¹⁷ We do not hear elsewhere of replacements, and from Augustus on hostages included adults and children of both sexes.¹¹⁸ Clearly rank mattered; Pliny the Elder thinks of eastern hostages as royal children (*HN* 6.23). So did numbers. More hostages were demanded from the north, the Romans recognizing the diffuse nature of political power there, than from the east.¹¹⁹ It should not be assumed that hostages were always carefully vetted. Q. Popaedi in the Social War passed slave children off as his own offspring (App. *B Civ.* 1.6).

It must be uncertain whether barbarian hostages interpreted their role in the same way as the Romans did. A Greek inscription records the death of a brother of the king of Iberia. He died while accompanying Trajan towards Nisibis as a companion of the leader of the Italians.¹²⁰ Giving hostages to Rome was double edged for a barbarian ruler. On the one hand it could be used to remove high-ranking potential troublemakers; on the other they became a potential weapon which Rome could use against the ruler who sent them.¹²¹ Another useful diplomatic threat was high-ranking barbarians who fled to Rome as refugees. Many were given somewhere to live, some far away, others close by their native land.¹²²

It is notable that some Romans attempted to flee outside the empire, usually to the east.¹²³ Several, like Zenobia, failed to make it, but a few of those who did could prove useful to the eastern monarch, as Q. Labienus was to the Parthians in the late Republic.¹²⁴ Harboursing a refugee from

¹¹⁵ On which there is surprisingly little modern work: Aymard (1961) and Braund (1984) 12–16, who cites Walker (1980).

¹¹⁶ Aymard (1961) 136–7 argued that Caes. *B Gall.* 1.14.7 implies that Roman hostages had been given to the Helvetii; at Dio Cass. 72.15 Marcus and the Marcomanni exchange hostages (a mistake by the Byzantine epitomator?).

¹¹⁷ Suet. *Aug.* 21. Aymard (1961) 136–40 argued that Augustus was showing awareness of German thinking. Ferris (2000) 30 wrongly claims the passage talks about women *and* children.

¹¹⁸ E.g. Strabo 16.748–9; Braund (1984) 12–16.

¹¹⁹ Braund (1984) 16.

¹²⁰ *IGRom.* xiv 1374; translated in Sherck (1988) no. 131. Even if he was leading a native contingent he would have been in a sense in Roman eyes a hostage, a pledge for the good faith of his brother. The point is that natives probably fitted their experience as hostages into their own value system.

¹²¹ Braund (1984) 13. ¹²² Braund (1984) 166–74; Austin and Rankov (1995) 24–5, 135–6.

¹²³ Braund (1984) 166 n. 13.

¹²⁴ Stoneman (1992) 176–7, on Zenobia; Syme (1939) 223, on Labienus.

Rome, however, could also provide Rome with an excuse for war (Dio Cass. 77.19.1–2).

Perceptions of their empire's superiority over other powers precluded the Romans from following Hellenistic Greek practice in using marriage as an instrument of diplomacy in this period.¹²⁵ Antony, vilified for his relationship with Cleopatra, accused Octavian of betrothing himself to the daughter of the king of the Getae and Julia to the king himself (Suet. *Aug.* 63). Roman superiority was played out in stories of two individuals. Augustus sent an Italian slavegirl, Musa, as a present to the Parthian king. She became the Parthian queen, deposed her husband and set their son on the throne.¹²⁶ Felix, a freedman of Claudius, was said to have married three queens.¹²⁷

Roman thinking about tribute and subsidies was complex. There is surprisingly little evidence for foreign rulers regularly paying tribute to Rome beyond the often costly symbolic gifts discussed earlier.¹²⁸ Yet when it happened it was a straightforwardly good thing, as when the Marcomanni gave many horses and cattle to Marcus (Dio Cass. 72.11.2). Attitudes to Romans paying subsidies to others were deeply ambiguous.¹²⁹ If done by someone the commentator considered a good Roman it would be seen as an unforced gift and thus good. It was a sign of wisdom, even love of mankind (*philanthropia*). But if done by a bad Roman then it was a forced exaction and thus bad. It was a sign of weakness. Marcus is praised for giving some deserving tribes subsidies.¹³⁰ Domitian is condemned for buying peace.¹³¹

Extracts of Cassius Dio on Marcus and Commodus negotiating with the northern tribes preserved in a ninth-century work on embassies to the Romans provide a unique dossier on specific Roman diplomacy. As analysed by Stahl patterns emerge in the treaties agreed.¹³² There are three main elements: a treaty of friendship (including statement of relationship, return of booty, prisoners and deserters, and contribution to the Roman army); the regulation of tribal autonomy (including Rome choosing the tribe's king,

¹²⁵ Braund (1984) 173 n. 79. See Hopwood (1997) for the ideological problems caused by later diplomatic marriages of imperial princesses to barbarians.

¹²⁶ Bivar (1983b) 66–8.

¹²⁷ Suet. *Claud.* 28. The case was different for descendants of Hellenistic royal houses whose kingdoms had been abolished and had themselves become high-status Roman citizens: Braund (1984) 173–4.

¹²⁸ Above, section VIII; Braund (1984) 62–6. In *ILS* 986 transdanubian kings settled in Roman territory pay tribute; this is not mentioned for kings brought to the river to worship standards.

¹²⁹ Mattern (1999) 121, 158–9, 178–80.

¹³⁰ Dio Cass. 72.19.1; Mattern (1999) 180; cf. the wise Indian king in Philostr. *VA* 2.26.

¹³¹ Dio Cass. 67.7.4; Plin. *Pan.* 12.2; cf. Sidebottom (2005) for other examples of good/bad emperors being praised/blamed for the same actions.

¹³² Stahl (1989) 289–317; summarized by Potter (1996) 55–6.

Roman officers to be at tribal meetings, bans on alliance with other peoples and supervision of dealings with other tribes) and a definition of the tribe's future relations with Rome (including bans on certain activities such as settlements and commerce, future contributions to Rome, and Rome not installing a garrison).

From these, certain general principles of Roman diplomacy emerge. The barbarians should ask the emperor for things. The requests should be based on their friendly attitude, loyalty and services to Rome.¹³³ The emperor, like the gods,¹³⁴ could refuse the requests.¹³⁵ The Romans, always suspicious of barbarian 'conspiracies',¹³⁶ desired to preclude any friendships between the barbarians that were not initiated by Rome (Suet. *Aug.* 48). The inherently treacherous nature of barbarians meant that a policy of 'divide and rule' was always apposite (Tac. *Ann.* 2.26, 2.44; Dio Cass. 78.12.2a–3) and supervision desirable. The emperor does not ask them for anything; instead he tells them his decisions. In an ideal world the emperor had a straight choice. He could station a garrison among the barbarians and begin direct rule or he could appoint a king. This was the choice Trajan had when Parthamasiris laid down his diadem, expecting its return. Instead Trajan declared that Armenia belonged to the Romans and would have a Roman governor.¹³⁷ Yet the world was seldom ideal in Roman eyes. Armenia was usually the focus of a unique working practice. The Parthian king would choose a member of his own Arsacid house as king, and Rome would formally invest the new ruler.¹³⁸ This neatly shows the Roman stress on the symbolic over the practical in diplomacy. The importance to Rome of at least formally appointing kings is witnessed by the prevalence of coin types boasting of the practice.¹³⁹ One can stand for the many (fig. 1.5).¹⁴⁰ Trajan, seated on a tribunal, crowns the king of Parthia who stands below him, while another kneeling Parthian makes a gesture of supplication.

X. IDEOLOGY: WAR AND PEACE

Cicero provides a retrospective justification for the Romans' acquisition of their empire (*Rep.* 3.34). It was all down to keeping faith (*fides*) and concern for safety or health (*salus*). This should not be taken, as it has been in the

¹³³ Myths of Rome's Trojan origins meant that appeals to kinship were internal to the empire in this period: Jones (1999) 81–121; Erskine (2001) 168–97.

¹³⁴ Henderson (1998), see index under 'Religion'.

¹³⁵ E.g. App. *praefatio.* 7. Requests to send aid to the Romans should be refused, e.g. Dio Cass. 72.27.1a.

¹³⁶ E.g. Sall. *Hist.* 4.67 (69), Mithridates' letter to Arsaces.

¹³⁷ Dio Cass. 68.19.1–20.4; App. *Praef.* 7, for general view.

¹³⁸ Campbell (1993) 228–32; Mattern (1999) 176–8.

¹³⁹ Mattern (1999) 178 n. 53; Gobl (1961) 70–80. ¹⁴⁰ BMC, vol. III, p. 223, no. 1046; pl. 43.1.



Figure 1.5 Coin depicting the seated Trajan crowning a king of Parthia.

past, to imply that Rome was a reluctant imperialist.¹⁴¹ *Fides* included a Roman commitment to defend its allies/clients.¹⁴² But *fides* was reciprocal. Rome's clients should keep faith with Rome. Failure to comply with Rome's wishes was a breach of *fides* which allowed a Roman 'retaliation' to be a 'just war'. Concern for the *salus* of Rome obviously included wars of self-defence. But it did not stop there. The Romans have plausibly been labelled 'status warriors'.¹⁴³ Any injury to Rome or loss of face on its part was thought to encourage arrogance and contempt for Rome on the part of 'irrational' barbarians (see section II above). A bad attitude in a foreign power, or even its mere existence, could be seen as a threat to the *salus* of Rome, and so Roman aggression could be a 'just war'.¹⁴⁴

The blurring of subject and client peoples, both thought of as allies (*socii*) with whom Rome had friendship (*amicitia*), led to a useful flexibility in categorizing armed conflicts. Provincial revolts, like the Dalmatian one in AD 6, could be seen as foreign wars (Suet. *Aug.* 20; *Tib.* 16). Conversely Septimius Severus' second campaign against the Caledonians and

¹⁴¹ Cf. Barnes (1986) 41–80.

¹⁴² Above, section II; in this period all allies were considered subordinate to Rome.

¹⁴³ Mattern (1999) 162–210.

¹⁴⁴ On 'just war' see Bainton (1961) 33–45; Albert (1980); Grant (1980); Barnes (1986); Brunt (1990b) 288–323; Mantovani (1990).



Figure 1.6 Rock-hewn relief depicting king Shapur of Persia humiliating defeated Roman rulers.

Maeatae could be conceptualized as an attempt to crush a revolt (Dio Cass. 77.15.1).

Under the Principate members of the dominant Stoic school of philosophy could see war, which was caused by the wickedness and greed of men, as an aberration from a normal state of peace.¹⁴⁵ In this they appear out of step with popular ideas, which saw war as a necessary precursor to and underwriter of peace. On the Altar of Peace (Ara Pacis) in Rome, the most evocative and complex visual communicator of ideas about peace, the goddess Roma sits on a pile of captured weapons and the god Mars in full armour watches over Romulus and Remus.¹⁴⁶ Again on the temple of the divine Hadrian in Rome (Hadrianeum) peaceful personifications of the provinces of the empire were separated by depictions of captured arms and armour.¹⁴⁷

Popular opinion was not unaware of the horrors of war. The explicit justification for watching gladiatorial combat was that seeing criminals and slaves meet death in the arena with courage prepared the audience to do the same on the battlefield (Cic. *Tusc.* 2.41; Plin. *Pan.* 33.1). The horrors,

¹⁴⁵ Sidebottom (1993) 245–50.

¹⁴⁶ Zanker (1988); Elsner (1991).

¹⁴⁷ Kleiner (1992) 283–5; Ferris (2000) 83–5.

however, were usually considered in the context of the other side. Trajan's column revealed death, enslavement and exile repeatedly happening to Dacians, with just one scene of Romans suffering torture.¹⁴⁸ War indeed could be considered a positively good thing. Cassius Dio believed that Septimius Severus, on whose *consilium* he had served, started a war in Britain to change his son's mode of life for the better and because the legions were becoming enervated by idleness.¹⁴⁹

The self-same school of philosophy that could consider war a wicked aberration also could produce an all-purpose justification of the emperor's wars.¹⁵⁰ The emperor ruled because he had complete virtue (*aretê*), of which the most important specific aspect was love of mankind (*philanthropia*). This expressed itself in giving benefits to his subjects. The ruler should fight and defeat tyrants so that he could give their subjects the benefits of his *philanthropia*. If the emperor was faced with another good ruler he should also fight him. The winner would be shown to have more virtue, and would then give more benefits to the former subjects of the defeated. It may be doubted whether Roman emperors much heeded this sort of thinking,¹⁵¹ but it gave intellectuals another way to justify any war-making on the part of the empire.

XI. CONCLUSION

Two pieces of evidence, one literary and one visual, sum up Roman ideal interstate relations and their opposite.

Valerius Maximus (5.7) tells how Ariobarzanes of Cappadocia, when sitting on a tribunal next to Pompey, saw his son sitting in the lowly position of the 'scribe's corner'. Unable to bear this Ariobarzanes got down from his chair and placed his diadem on his son's head, telling him to move to the tribunal. The young man cried, trembled and could not move, while the diadem slipped down. Pompey then called the young man king and forced him to sit on the tribunal. This is the Roman ideal. Native desires are allowed where they are respectful of Rome, but the dominance of Rome is symbolically played out.

A rock-hewn sculpture from Iran illustrates the opposite (fig. 1.6).¹⁵² It depicts the Sasanid Persian king Shapur as a mounted warrior. His horse tramples one fallen Roman emperor, while he holds another captive with his right hand. In front of Shapur a third Roman kneels with his arms in

¹⁴⁸ Scene xlv; Hannestad (1988) 162; Ferris (2000) 66–7.

¹⁴⁹ Dio Cass. 77.11.1; cf. Herodian 3.14.1–2. See Momigliano (1966a) on the inadequate nature, to our eyes, of ancient historians' discussions of the causes of wars.

¹⁵⁰ Sidebottom (1993) 256–7, on Dio Chrys. *Or.* 2. ¹⁵¹ Sidebottom (1990) 73–95.

¹⁵² Shepherd (1983) plate 91; discussion at 1082–3; cf. inscription of Shapur translated by Frye (1984) 371–3.

a gesture of submission. Normally we only hear from the Roman side in interstate relations.¹⁵³ Here we have the views of the other side, and they are a Roman nightmare¹⁵⁴.

¹⁵³ We lack anything comparable with, say, Liutprand of Cremona's accounts of his two embassies to Byzantium; translated by Wright (1993) 151–6, 177–210.

¹⁵⁴ It was said that the Sasanids had the skin of the captured Valerian stuffed and hung in a temple to impress Roman ambassadors: Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 5.6.

CHAPTER 2

MILITARY FORCES

BORIS RANKOV

The story of the Roman army is one of almost constant evolution and development. Even so, the period of the late Republic and early Principate stands out as one in which Rome's military forces underwent a transformation in almost every aspect. This transformation reflected the social upheaval and political revolution of the period, but also the massive physical expansion of the empire which brought Rome into conflict with an unprecedented range of enemies, geographically scattered and militarily diverse. It came about little by little, but with major shifts at both the beginning and the end of the first century BC.

I. FROM REPUBLIC TO PRINCIPATE

1. The decline of the manipular army

At the end of the second century BC, and even as late as the 80s, it may still be possible to recognize the survival of the citizen manipular army described in the sixth book of Polybius half a century before. However, as described in chapter 11 in vol. 1 (pp. 356–7), it is clear that groups of three maniples were increasingly being deployed together as a mass to form cohorts.¹ The cohort was essentially a massed grouping of a maniple of *hastati*, a maniple of *principes* and a maniple of *triarii* or *pilani*, one behind the other as before but no longer separated into three lines, and with ten cohorts forming a legion. The maniple had had its day, and by the 50s BC there is little trace of it in the Caesarian corpus, which describes Roman armies tactically almost entirely in terms of cohorts (rather even than of legions).

There had also developed a tendency to longer military service, with extended absence from home – up to six years at a time – as troops were unable to return to their homes at the end of each campaigning season. Some chose to continue volunteering for the full sixteen years of their liability or more, as in Livy's famous but perhaps apocryphal story of Spurius Ligustinus, who had completed twenty-two years of service before

¹ Bell (1965); Rawson (1971).

volunteering again in 171 BC (42.34.5–11). Such centurions risen from the ranks were later among the dictator Sulla's staunchest supporters (cf. Sall. *Cat.* 37; Tac. *Ann.* 3.75.1), and they frequently appear in the pages of Caesar.

Prolonged service also meant that, whereas previously individual legions had been constituted annually only for the length of a single campaigning season, they might now be maintained with a hard core of the same personnel for years at a time, although their officers and even the legionary number assigned to them might change annually. This would inevitably have resulted in the emergence of some sort of unit identity, as is very evident in Caesar's armies.

2. *The Marian reforms*

Although the decline of the manipular army was part of a prolonged and not necessarily linear evolutionary process, it is possible to identify as a major catalyst the military humiliations of the last decade and a half of the second century BC, at the hands of the Scordisci, Cimbri and Teutones, as well as the Numidian king Jugurtha. A fifty-year-old senator of undistinguished background, C. Marius, used the popular revulsion against the aristocratic mismanagement of Rome's armies to obtain the consulship of 107 and the command in Africa for himself. His success there, together with the disaster at Arausio in 105, prompted his re-election as consul for every year from 104 to 100. During this period, he led Rome to final victory against the Teutones in 102 and the Cimbri in 101, though not before the latter had invaded Italy itself.

The army he employed to win these victories had been subject to better individual training than before, by gladiatorial instructors, at the behest of P. Rutilius Rufus, one of the consuls of 105 and, ironically, a rival of Marius.² The Roman armies of this period also underwent a number of general reforms which were attributed to Marius himself, although some at least may only reflect the institutionalization by Marius of existing trends.

One of the most famous of the reforms, making Roman soldiers carry their own equipment and turning them into 'Marius' mules', in order to limit the need for pack animals and camp-followers and so speed up the march, seems to be little more than a reintroduction (with possibly some extension) of earlier army discipline.³ Polybius (18.18.4–5) mentions troops carrying their own shields, javelins and stakes, while Sallust claims that Marius' predecessor in Numidia, Metellus, had already enforced the practice (Sall. *Iug.* 45.2). Similarly, the use of a wooden pin in the shank of the Roman army javelin (*pilum*), so that if it stuck in a shield the pin would break and the *pilum* could not be thrown back by the enemy (Plut. *Vit.*

² Val. Max. 2.3.2; Frontin. *Str.* 4.2.2.

³ Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.7; Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 267L.

Mar. 25.1–2), can be seen as a refinement of the long-necked design which went back to the fifth century at least, and which was developed further by the introduction of a soft-metal shank in the Caesarian period.

The adoption of the cohort as a tactical unit was also a reform which had been under way for over a century, since the Hannibalic War. Some of the other reforms attributed to Marius are probably simple corollaries of the adoption of the cohort formation (see pp. 127–30 below). This is true of his supposed abolition of the *velites* or light-armed skirmishers, as well as of the rear maniples of *triarii* ceasing to use the thrusting-spear and adopting the javelin like the other maniples. From now on, all legionary foot soldiers fought as *pilum*-equipped heavy infantry. Also to be connected with the cohort reform is a development attributed by Pliny the Elder (*HN* 10.16) specifically to Marius' consulship of 104 BC, the adoption of the eagle as the sole standard of the legion as a whole. The cohort formation does not appear ever to have been given a standard of its own, and even in the Roman imperial army a *signum* in the shape of a hand (*manus*) continued to be used for every group of two centuries, i.e. maniple (compare Polybius' use of *semaia* or 'standard' as the Greek term for a maniple).

Finally, the most significant reform of all, the recruitment of *capite censi* – men without any property qualification at all – into the Roman legions, was probably a new departure at this period but was not unprecedented for times of crisis. This had been adopted as an emergency measure as early as 280 BC for the war against Tarentum, and after the Cannae disaster in 216 BC legions had even been recruited from slaves freed for the purpose. The need for troops had been putting the property qualification under pressure for some time, with the earliest recorded qualification of 11,000 *asses* (Livy 1.43.7) reduced to 4,000 by the time of Polybius (6.19.2) in the mid-second century, and apparently to 1,500 by 129 BC (Cic. *Rep.* 2.40). The agrarian law of Tiberius Gracchus was in part an attempt to maintain the number of peasants with the qualification by distributing public land to the poor. What was new about Marius' dispensing with the qualification was perhaps that it was never reimposed thereafter, thus opening the way for ambitious generals to turn the poorest of Rome's citizens into their own clients by the promise of obtaining land distributions for them on discharge.⁴

3. *Legionary recruitment in the late Republic*

Before the death of Marius in 86 BC a major political change transformed the nature of the Roman army. Since the early Republic Rome's citizen legions had been supported by auxiliary troops – *alae* or

⁴ Gabba (1976b); Keppie (1984) 57–79.

‘wings’ – drawn from its subject allies, who were normally compelled to provide military forces rather than financial tribute. These allies were mostly Italian, although by the end of the second century Rome was also employing Spanish, Gallic and north African troops, especially as cavalry. Indeed, the last recorded instance of the old system of using the wealthiest members of Roman society – the knights or *equites* – as cavalry is in 102 BC, when M. Aemilius Scaurus, the son of Rome’s senior senator, and his fellows ran away in a skirmish with the Cimbri (Val. Max. 5.8.4).

For many years Rome’s Italian allies (*socii*) had felt themselves discriminated against, both politically and in sharing the spoils of the empire which they had helped to conquer. Eventually this resentment exploded into the so-called Social War between Rome and its central and southern Italian allies which broke out in 91 BC. Although, after many setbacks, Rome was victorious militarily, peace was bought only at the cost of accepting all Italians south of the River Po into Roman citizenship. From the late 80s onwards these peoples became eligible to serve in the legions, creating a vast new source of direct recruitment for Rome. By the middle of the century the new citizens, enfranchised but also impoverished by the Social War, were forming the backbone of the Roman legions. Light-armed troops continued to be supplied mainly by Rome’s overseas allies. The latter also provided specialist arms, such as the Balearic slingers and Cretan archers. At the same time these armies became identified more and more with individual leaders such as Sulla, Pompey and eventually Caesar rather than with the Roman state. It was the pan-Italian legions, eager for pay and discharge bonuses of land, which completed the conquest of the Roman empire, in the east, in Spain and in Gaul, and which fought the civil wars which were to bring an end to the Republic.

4. *Julius Caesar and the origins of the Roman imperial army*

When the consul Julius Caesar was allocated the provinces first of Cisalpine and then of Transalpine Gaul (i.e. the territories either side of the Alps) in 59 BC, the territory under his control included the area south of the River Po, which had become one of Rome’s best legionary recruiting grounds. Between 58 and 49 BC he recruited Roman citizens from this area and ‘Latin’ citizens (i.e. people who had not yet been granted full Roman citizenship) from north of the Po to build up a formidable army of ten legions. This he used initially to conquer the whole of Gaul and then, when he fell out with his political partner Pompey, to defeat the latter’s forces across the entire Mediterranean world.

Most of Caesar’s legions from Gaul were subsequently disbanded and their personnel settled in colonies in Italy and southern Gaul. For instance veterans of the Seventh and Eighth were given land at Calatia and Casilinum

in Campania, of the Ninth in Picenum, of the Eleventh at Bovianum in Samnium, of the Twelfth perhaps at Parma and of the Thirteenth at Spello in Umbria; meanwhile, those of the Sixth were settled at Arles and those of the Tenth at Narbonne. New legions had been recruited by Caesar as consul of 48 BC in Italy, and having gained experience in the early battles of the Civil War, they now brought it to a successful conclusion for Caesar in Asia, Africa and Spain.

After the murder of Caesar on the Ides of March, 44 BC, some of his surviving legions were in Italy and the western provinces, while others had been left behind as part of the garrison of Macedonia and Syria. These had been supplemented by legions made up of former Pompeian troops. His lieutenant M. Antonius (Mark Antony) reconstituted the Fifth Legion from its veterans in Italy, M. Aemilius Lepidus the Sixth and Tenth in Gaul, and Octavian, Caesar's great-nephew who had been adopted by the terms of Caesar's will and now bore his name, the Seventh and Eighth in Campania. Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius, took over the legions left in the east, but after their defeat at Philippi in 42 BC the forces of the empire were divided between Antony, Lepidus and Octavian. Inevitably, these three became rivals for supreme power. Lepidus had been eliminated politically by 36 BC, but Mark Antony and Octavian fought a final round of civil war, culminating in Antony's defeat at the naval battle of Actium in 31 BC.⁵

Each of the armies of Antony and Octavian was built round a core of Caesarian legions, and many of the others on both sides had previously fought alongside each other either for the Caesarians or the Republicans. These legions were frequently reluctant to fight each other. In 41 BC officers on both sides had initially averted a conflict between Octavian and L. Antonius, Mark Antony's brother, by refusing to fight. The following year, Antony and Octavian were forced to agree the Treaty of Brundisium when the same thing happened. Lepidus fell from power in 36 BC when Octavian simply (if bravely) walked into his camp and persuaded his troops to transfer their allegiance to him and avoid further fighting. One may also speculate that in 31 BC concern over such reluctance among some of his forces may have been one of the factors which persuaded Antony to fight the final battle at sea rather than on land.

While desertion from one faction to another, and even the murder of generals, had not been uncommon previously, the sort of difficulty experienced by Antony and Octavian in getting the armies to do their bidding was in some ways a new factor in the political struggles of the period. With their enemies less clear cut than in the past, the troops were more inclined to disobey or even impose their own will on their leaders. They thus discovered a

⁵ Keppie (1984) 103–31.

voice of their own as the power behind the military dynasts at precisely the same time as they had lost it as citizens in the Roman assemblies. Antony's eventual suicide in 30 BC left Octavian in sole control of some sixty legions who had at least an intimation of their potential to dominate their master and many of whom had fought against him. The reorganization of these forces was therefore the single most pressing issue for the new régime.

5. *The creation of the Augustan legions*

Discharge and settlement of Caesar's veterans and those of the triumvirs had been a primary concern since the latter had seized power. Finding land for veterans in Italy inevitably involved confiscations from political enemies and cities who had backed the losing side, and this was deeply unpopular. As initially the junior partner in the triumvirate, this task was entrusted after the battle of Philippi to Octavian, who had therefore been given control of Italy, and it earned him deep hostility. The despair of the eighteen cities whose land was taken away to settle the veterans of twenty-eight legions forms the background to Virgil's *Eclogues*, which were written at this time. Despite mass settlements the problem continued to plague Octavian and was only exacerbated by the defeat of the last Republican resistance under Pompey's son Sextus Pompeius in 36 BC, and then by the defeat of Antony.

After Actium Octavian disbanded about half of the legions he had acquired and discharged almost all the troops still under arms. This removed from active service the generation of soldiers who had repeatedly held their leaders to ransom. Nevertheless, maintaining control of the army remained an underlying problem (and indeed necessity) for emperors throughout the imperial period. The emperor Tiberius likened his position to 'holding a wolf by the ears' (Suet. *Tib.* 25.1). Octavian's own supporters were settled in the twenty-eight veteran colonies which he now set up in Italy, corresponding to the number of legions he aimed to maintain on a standing basis. These colonies were intended to act as a source of manpower in a political emergency, as loci for future veteran settlement and as long-term recruiting grounds. The veterans of Antony's legions were less favoured, perhaps, in being allocated land in the provinces, although overseas colonies had been used since the time of Gaius Gracchus in the second century BC.⁶

Octavian's other solution to healing the wounds of the civil wars was more imaginative. The mass discharges of 30 BC had to be made up by mass conscription. Keppie (developing Schmitthenner) has argued that the great majority of the legions into which these men were taken were not new creations but essentially the legions of the triumviral periods which were,

⁶ Keppie (1983).

for the first time, not disbanded when the vast majority of their personnel were released. This can be seen as the turning point in the creation of the standing army of the Principate. What is more, most of these survivals can be recognized as continuations of the Caesarian legions of the Gallic and Civil Wars, and some of the titles they bore later originate in that period (legions previously only had numbers).⁷ These legions had been essential elements of the claims of both Antony and Caesar to be the political heirs of Julius Caesar (indeed, Octavian had not scrupled to give some of his new legions the same numbers as Caesarian legions serving with Antony), and it was of even greater propaganda value for Octavian now symbolically to reunite Caesar's old army.

Thus, the legions *I Germanica*, *III Macedonica*, *VII Paterna* (later *Claudia*), *VIII Augusta*, *XIII Gemina* and *XIV Gemina* on the side of Octavian, and *III Gallica*, *V Alaudae*, *VI Ferrata*, *X Equestris* (later *Gemina*), and *XII Fulminata* on Antony's side, may all have had their ultimate origins in legions which served with Caesar. The majority of these adopted the bull (*taurus*), the sign of the zodiac associated with Caesar's supposed ancestor the goddess Venus, as their legionary emblem.

In addition to these Caesarian legions, another sixteen with origins in the triumphal period were kept in existence by Octavian: *II* and *III Augusta*, *V Macedonica*, *VI Victrix*, *IX Hispaniensis* (later *Hispana*), *X Fretensis*, *XI* (later *Claudia*), *XV Apollinaris*, *XVI Gallica*, *XVII*, *XVIII*, *XIX*, *XX* (later *Valeria Victrix*) and *XXI Rapax* had been raised by Octavian either in the late 40s BC or, in the case of the last two, possibly in 30 BC, while *III Cyrenaica* and *IIII Scythica* were created by Antony. Most of these adopted as their emblem the sign of the zodiac associated with Octavian's conception, the capricorn, with a few exceptions including *V Macedonica*, *VI Victrix* and *X Fretensis* which had been given pseudo-Caesarian numbers by Octavian and so used the bull.⁸

To these must be added *XXII Deiotariana*, which had been formed as part of the army of Deiotarus, the king of Galatia, in imitation of a Roman legion, had fought alongside Caesar at the battle of Zela in 47 BC ('I came, I saw, I conquered': Suet. *Iul.* 37.2), and was incorporated into the Roman army sometime before 25 BC. This brought the total to twenty-eight legions – twice the ten to fourteen legions which had been the normal establishment under the middle and later Republic – to defend the empire and keep Octavian in his supreme position. Despite the total destruction or cashiering over time of eight of these legions and one later foundation, only fifteen more were created before the middle of the third century AD. It can thus be seen that the reorganization of 30 BC established the basic shape of the Roman army for the next 250 years.

⁷ Schmitthenner (1958); Keppie (1984) 132–44.

⁸ Von Domaszewski (1885); (1892).

When Octavian declared a return to a state of peace and normality in 27 BC, he was granted the title by which he was henceforth known to posterity, Augustus, and effectively became emperor. As consul, he received a vast province covering Spain, Gaul and Syria. No fewer than twenty of the remaining legions were attached to this province, giving him complete domination without intemperately undermining the continuing importance of the Senate whose provincial governors controlled the other eight legions. Military crises during his long reign of nearly forty-one years gave him the excuse gradually to attach the provinces of these governors to his own, leaving only a single legion, in Africa, under senatorial control by the end of his reign; Caius Caligula took even that away in AD 39 (Tac. *Hist.* 4.48). In legal terms Augustus ruled this province as consul or proconsul, and the governors of the individual territories (also known as provinces), who were appointed directly by him, were his deputies bearing the title *legati Augusti pro praetore*. These men were all ex-consuls, among the most senior officials of the empire, and each commanded armies of several legions in Augustus' name.

The troops levied in 30 BC appear to have been discharged in 14 BC, having served sixteen years (*Res Gestae* 16.1), although they were required to stay in reserve for another four years. According to Polybius (6.19.2) sixteen years had been the maximum liability for service under the Republic, although under normal circumstances few served longer than six years in one stretch. In 13 BC sixteen years was fixed as the normal term of service (Dio Cass. 54.25.5–6) and from then on voluntary recruitment became usual, although some conscription continued, to keep up numbers.⁹ Moreover, since land was becoming ever more difficult to obtain and mass confiscations were no longer acceptable with the civil wars officially at an end, legionary troops were rewarded in cash on discharge (see pp. 162–3 below). At some stage after the death of Augustus the regular term of service for legionaries became twenty-five or twenty-six years (new recruitment being annual but discharges taking place only every other year), and it remained so throughout the Principate.

In these ways, in the course of Augustus' reign, a standing Roman army was set up on a permanent basis, under the command of the reigning emperor and the direct control of his appointed legates, swearing loyalty directly to him and financially dependent upon him.

II. THE LEGIONS OF THE PRINCIPATE

The organization of the imperial legion was essentially unchanged from that of the late Republic. It continued to consist of ten cohorts, each one

⁹ Davies (1969a); Brunt (1974).

made up of six centuries (the equivalent of three maniples), except for the First Cohort, which – for reasons which remain obscure – appears to have had five double centuries both in the late Republican era (cf. *Caes. B Civ.* 3.91.4) and again in the late first and early second century AD (the evidence is unclear about other periods; see below). Since each century had a paper strength of eighty men (not the literal hundred), each cohort would notionally consist of 480 men and each legion of 5,120 infantry. In reality legions would sometimes have been under strength and sometimes over.

In addition the legions of the Principate were equipped with 120 cavalry. In the middle Republic, each legion had had 300, drawn from the very wealthiest members of society, including senators. After the disgrace of the younger Scaurus, however (see p. 33 above), it would seem that such cavalry was no longer employed. Caesar appears to have had no cavalry at all in his legions, relying instead on Gallic and German cavalry, and on one occasion he had specially to mount some infantrymen of the Tenth Legion in order to have a cavalry escort. It is probably from this incident that the legion derived its later title *Equestris* ('mounted') (*Caes. B Gall.* 1.42.5–6). The small body of cavalry reintroduced during the Principate does not seem to have had a tactical role, which was left to the cavalry of the *auxilia* (see pp. 50–5 below), and indeed inscriptions show that cavalrymen were enrolled in the infantry centuries rather than in cavalry squadrons (*turmae*). They probably acted as couriers and as escort and bodyguard for the legate and his senior officers.

Under the Republic, legions had been commanded by their military tribunes (*tribuni militum*), men of equestrian or senatorial status. This was a post which was frequently held with pride by former consuls. The tribunes of the first four legions, which were always attached to the consuls, were elected by the people, while those of the other legions were normally appointed by the army commander. Each legion had six tribunes, who took it in turns to command in pairs for two months at a time (*Polyb.* 6.19.8–9, 6.34.3). During the second century BC, however, sections of an army, including legions, had sometimes been commanded by *legati* selected by the army commander. C. Marius had been serving in this capacity in Numidia before his first consulship. This practice was used extensively by Caesar in Gaul, who employed ten senatorial *legati* over several years, including Quintus Cicero, brother of the famous orator. Some of these *legati* became highly experienced and frequently commanded individual or even groups of legions. As already discussed, Augustus used senior *legati* to govern his provinces, but towards the end of his reign he also employed more junior *legati*, ex-quaestors or ex-praetors, instead of tribunes, to command individual legions. It thus became the norm for legions to be commanded by ex-praetors with the title of *legati Augusti*, and when theirs was the only legion in a province they also doubled as the provincial governor.

There continued to be six tribunes to a legion, although only the senior tribune (the *tribunus laticlavus*) was of senatorial rank, usually a youth of nineteen or twenty waiting to begin his senatorial career. His principal role was to shadow the *legatus* and learn for the future, and only rarely did he command troops in battle. The other five tribunes (the *tribuni angusticlavii*) were of equestrian rank (i.e. Roman knights), who had usually already commanded an auxiliary cohort and were often significantly older than the senatorial tribune (see pp. 51–3 below). Their role seems to have been mainly administrative, although they sometimes commanded detachments of troops.

Almost all of the senior officers of the legion, therefore, were men qualified by birth or wealth rather than any great military experience. Consequently, they are often characterized as amateurs by modern historians, but the use of the word ‘amateur’ is misleading and would not have been understood by the Romans of the period. The habits of command and overseeing administration would have been inculcated from birth in a class of men who grew up in households of dozens, perhaps hundreds, of slaves, controlling vast estates scattered across the countryside. Much of the work of running the legion, especially in peacetime, would have been seen as little different from the duties of magistrates or imperial functionaries in Rome or in the cities of the empire. Indeed traditionally, under the Republic, the men the officers commanded in the legions were the same men who were their clients and whom they had addressed in the assemblies at Rome. This may have changed by the early Principate, but the ethos continued. What was required of an officer was self-confidence and the ability to command respect by innate bearing and character. It was the principle by which contemporaries justified the purchase of commissions in the British army of the early nineteenth century or the list of ‘suitable’ schools which qualified one to apply for an army commission during the First World War.

This approach operated with considerable success in part because it was well established, because Roman army tactics were fairly straightforward and easily learned and because command and control were relatively simple. But the other key element which made this system work were the centurions. A centurion commanded each century, and each centurion and century within a cohort occupied a particular position in the line of battle, to a certain extent reflecting the old manipular army. The relative ranking of the centuries remained the same, but it is generally assumed (although there is no real evidence) that their position within the battle line was reversed. Thus the two centuries of *pilani* (the former *triarii*) would now have been at the front, the *principes* still in the middle and the *hastati* now at the back.

The centurions were the *pilus prior*, and the *pilus posterior*, the *princeps prior* and the *princeps posterior*, and the *hastatus prior* and the *hastatus posterior*, and they were further designated by the number of their cohort within

the legion. Most scholars have argued that all centurions ranked differentially,¹⁰ while a minority view is that all the centurions of cohorts II to X held the same rank and differed only in their position in the line.¹¹ The evidence, which comes almost entirely from inscriptions, remains problematic.

All scholars accept that the centurions of the First Cohort, of which there were only five (there was no *pilus posterior*), outranked all the others. This is indicated, among other things, by the larger than normal houses they were allocated within legionary fortresses. Also reflective of this, both Ps.-Hyginus (*De munitionibus castrorum* 3) and Vegetius (*Mil.* 2.6 and 8) indicate that the First Cohort consisted of the equivalent of ten centuries (i.e. five double centuries), and this is confirmed in the layout of the late-first/early-second-century legionary fortresses at Inchtuthil in Scotland, Caerleon in Wales, Neuss in Lower Germany and Lambaesis in Numidia, although not in earlier and later fortresses elsewhere.¹² There was a clear hierarchy among the five centurions, through which they progressed, holding each post for a year at a time. The sole *pilus* of the First Cohort was known as the *primus pilus*, and he was the senior centurion of the legion.

The majority of centurions were promoted from the ranks of junior officers (*principales*), usually after between thirteen and twenty years of service. Unlike the ordinary troops they were not discharged after twenty-five years but often remained in service. An inscription from Africa records a man who had served for fifty years, forty-six of them as a centurion (*CIL* VIII 217 = *ILS* 2658). Others, usually Roman knights, could obtain direct commissions as centurions, though these were perhaps in the minority. The ex-rankers at least were men of very considerable experience, who had risen through the junior grades by patronage or merit, and the centurions of the First Cohort would all have served several years in the army regardless of their origins. The youngest recorded *primus pilus* was forty-nine years old (*CIL* VI 3580 = *ILS* 2461), and for most this was the culmination of a long and very distinguished career. Such men at least would have been entirely professional in all the technical aspects of soldiering, and would have more than compensated for any weakness in those aspects among the aristocratic leadership. There is plenty of evidence from Caesar and later writers that the senior officers and centurions worked closely together and complemented each other, but that at cohort level tactical command was in the hands of the latter.

¹⁰ Von Domaszewski (1908), 80–112 was the first to put forward the basic argument. Further refinements were made by Parker (1928), Passerini (1949) and Birley (1963/4). See the comments by Dobson in the second edition of von Domaszewski (1967) xxiii–xxv.

¹¹ Wegeleben (1913) first put forward the argument for this in direct reaction to von Domaszewski (1908).

¹² Breeze (1969); Frere (1980).

Only the best or most favoured centurions reached the First Cohort, and many of those retired after becoming *primus pilus*. The latter, at least, held equestrian status, and early in the Principate a few were promoted to a tribunate of the legion or directly to the post of prefect of the camp (*praefectus castrorum*), which was the number three position in the legion after the *legatus* and the senatorial tribune. It was usually the *praefectus castrorum* who took command in the absence of the legate. From around the reign of Claudius a minority of former *primi pili* would go to Rome and command, in turn and for a year at a time with the rank of tribune, a cohort of *vigiles*, an urban cohort and a praetorian cohort (see pp. 45–9 below). Thereafter they would return to a legion as *primus pilus bis* (i.e. for the second time) to act as *praefectus castrorum*. A very few even progressed from there to one of the great equestrian procuratorships in the imperial service.¹³

Below the level of the centurionate there were a number of junior officers (*principales*) either in the centuries or in the office staffs (*officia*) of the tribunes, the *praefectus castrorum* or the legate.¹⁴ Their posts carried one-and-a-half times pay, or double pay for the most senior. *Principales* in the centuries included (in ascending order of seniority) the *tesserarius*, who was in charge of circulating the password to the watch, the *optio* who acted as deputy to the centurion and who carried a stick with which to keep the rear of the line steady, and the *signifer*, who carried the manipular standard (see p. 32 above). Centurions were usually promoted from among the *principales*. The senior *principalis* of the legion was the *aquilifer*, the man who carried the legionary eagle.

The office staffs normally consisted of *beneficiarii* (orderlies), with a *cornicularius* in charge, and their relative ranking depended on that of the senior officer they served. Some men might be seconded to a post in the governor's *officium* at the provincial capital as a *frumentarius* (courier) or a *beneficiarius consularis* (governor's orderly) and might then be promoted within that *officium* to the higher ranks of *speculator* (examiner), *commentariensis* (recorder) or even *cornicularius consularis* (chief of staff). The latter was usually in line for promotion to centurion.¹⁵

Before becoming a *principalis* a man would usually have served as an *immunis*, performing a specific role such as trumpet-player (*tubicen*) or hunter (*venator*), or book-keeper (*librarius*) or bodyguard of the governor (*singularis consularis*) which gave immunity from fatigues (cf. the German army rank of *Gefreite*, roughly equivalent to lance-corporal). *Immunes* posts were not ranks as such, carried no extra pay, and a man might return to being an ordinary soldier (*miles*) after holding such a posting for a time.

¹³ Dobson (1978). ¹⁴ Von Domaszewski (1908, 2nd edn Dobson 1967) xi–xvi, 28–50.

¹⁵ Rankov (1999); Nelis-Clément (2000).

Breeze has estimated that a legion of 5,000 men would have had about 620 *immunes* (c. 12.4 per cent) and 480 *principales* (9.6 per cent). An *immunis* post might be relatively easy to obtain after only a few years' service or even on entry to the legion if one had the right connections, especially since tenure was not permanent and there would have been some turnover. A *principalis* post, however, was much more difficult to obtain, perhaps only after five, ten or even more years of service, and since the step-up in rank was permanent, openings were available less frequently. Apart from the few higher fliers on their way to the centurionate (only about 1.5 per cent according to Breeze), the minority lucky enough to become *principales* might only obtain a senior post towards the end of their service, if at all, and could congratulate themselves on having had a very successful career. Thus, although the army was undoubtedly an avenue of social advancement, opportunities for promotion were really quite limited and only a very tiny percentage rose to even an ordinary centurionate.¹⁶

In fact the coming of peace and prosperity to the interior of the empire, and the shift to volunteer recruitment rather than conscription, meant that Italians found army service both less attractive than before and more avoidable. Those Italians who did wish to serve could find much better terms and conditions in the praetorian cohorts than in the legions (see p. 45 below). There were clear signs of strain at the death of Augustus in AD 14 when Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.16–17) reports mutinies in the Pannonian and German armies arising out of grievances which included poor pay, harsh discipline, men being kept on in service for thirty or even forty years rather than the sixteen promised, and discharge bonuses being paid out in poor provincial land rather than cash. The work of Forni and Mann has suggested that only about half of all legionaries were Italian by the middle of the first century AD, and that the figure drops to about one in five by the end of that century.¹⁷

From early in the reign of Augustus the legions were all stationed in the provinces, and by the reign of Claudius most were garrisoning a relatively fixed frontier line (see pp. 67–71 below). Almost inevitably, although there were always some Italians serving in most legions, recruitment tended to be from recently Romanized and newly enfranchised provincials in the provinces nearer the frontiers. In the west these provinces included Spain and Gaul in the first century AD, and in addition by the second century AD the German and Danubian provinces, as well as Africa. Recruitment in the east was mostly from Asia, Galatia and Syria. The only exception was when wholly new legions were raised, usually when there was an expectation of the annexation of new provinces. Legions such as *xv Primigenia* and *xxii Primigenia* raised by Caligula or perhaps Claudius in the first century AD,

¹⁶ Breeze (1974a), (1974b). ¹⁷ Forni (1953); Mann (1983).



Figure 2.1 Tombstone of Publius Flavoleius, a soldier of *legio XIV Gemina*. Such tombstones are one of our major sources of evidence on the Roman imperial army.

and *II Italica* and *III Italica* raised by Marcus Aurelius in the second century, were normally recruited in Italy (fig. 2.1).¹⁸

III. TROOPS BASED IN ROME

Rome had never had a permanent garrison under the Republic, and indeed there had always been an aversion to having armed troops within the city. This is reflected in the fact that, when a proconsul returned from campaign,

¹⁸ Ritterling (1925); Parker (1928; rev. edn 1971); Passerini (1949).

he officially laid down his *imperium* or power of command as he crossed the *pomerium* or sacred boundary of the city. Likewise the troops who took part in the triumphal processions of successful generals wore only their tunics and military belts as they marched through Rome, and were unarmed and unarmoured. Octavian stationed troops in Rome on a standing basis for the first time, although both he and his successors were careful as far as possible not to offend lingering Republican sensibilities.

1. *The praetorian cohorts*

The main military force which Octavian brought to Rome were the praetorian cohorts. The term *cohors praetoria* had been used informally during the Republic for the group of friends and clients which Roman governors and commanders took with them when operating abroad. During the first century BC, however, it came to refer to a general's bodyguard, especially in the context of the civil wars. Appian (*B Civ.* 5.3) tells us that after the battle of Philippi 8,000 of the troops of Antony and Octavian who were due for discharge asked to be kept on, and were formed into praetorian cohorts. Antony took three cohorts with him to the east (Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 39.2) and honoured them with the issue of a special coin in 32 BC, while Octavian had five cohorts with him at Actium (Oros. 6.19.8).

As with Antony's legions, Octavian kept on some of Antony's praetorians as well as his own. There were nine of these cohorts, although only three were kept in Rome, billeted around rather than in a military camp, while the other six were distributed around Italy (Suet. *Aug.* 49.1; *Tib.* 37.1). Inscriptions show that there were praetorian cohorts at Aquileia at the northern tip of the Adriatic at the end of his reign, for instance. By that time the number of cohorts had perhaps risen to twelve (*AE* 1978.286), although it was back down to nine by AD 23 according to Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.5).¹⁹ It rose again to twelve either under Caligula (AD 37–41) or Claudius (AD 41–54), and then to sixteen during the Civil War of AD 68–9 (Tac. *Hist.* 2.93), was reduced back to nine with the restoration of peace by Vespasian, and was finalized at ten cohorts by Domitian in the 80s AD.

The role of the praetorians was to provide a sovereign's escort both on campaign and in Rome, for instance when the emperor attended the Senate, and to provide the guard for the emperor's residence on the Palatine hill. In the early Principate this supplemented the personal bodyguard of Germans, organized in para-military fashion, which was maintained by the emperor (and initially by other prominent senators) as a relic of the Civil War period when even the most loyal Roman troops could not always be trusted. Each praetorian cohort in Rome mounted the guard for a month at a time, and

¹⁹ Keppie (1996).

its tribune received the watchword nightly from the emperor himself (Tac. *Ann.* 1.7, 13.2; Suet. *Calig.* 56.2, *Ner.* 9.1). It would appear that in deference to civilian sentiment, in the early Principate at least, they wore the toga over their uniform within the city of Rome, even when on duty (cf. Mart. 6.76; Tac. *Hist.* 1.38; *Ann.* 16.27).

The unit was specially privileged from the beginning. In 13 BC service was fixed at twelve years (Dio Cass. 54.25.6), and this was raised to sixteen in AD 5 (Dio Cass. 55.23.1), i.e. four years less than the legions in both cases. Senior *principales* might be given the status of *evocati Augusti* on retirement and be kept in reserve for appointment to the equivalent of a centurion's post should they be required.²⁰ The discharge bonus was fixed at 5,000 *denarii* (compared with 3,000 for legionaries) at the same time (Dio Cass. 55.23.1), and by the end of Augustus' reign their pay appears to have risen from twice (Dio Cass. 53.11.5) to more than three times (Tac. *Ann.* 1.17) that of the legionaries. They also received special donatives from the emperors more frequently and at a higher rate than the legions. Such was the price of their loyalty, vital for troops stationed so close to the centre of power.

The cohorts were most likely about 480 men (six centuries) strong, like a legionary cohort, becoming millitary, i.e. 800 men (ten centuries) strong from the reign of Vitellius in AD 69 (Tac. *Hist.* 2.93). As with the legions there was a small contingent of cavalry in each cohort, perhaps no more than 300 or 400 in total in the entire guard (cf. Ps.-Hyginus, *De munitionibus castrorum* 7, 30), and these may have included the troops known as *speculatores* (see below). Initially, each cohort was commanded by its own tribune, but from 2 BC they were placed under the overall control of two equestrian prefects (Dio Cass. 55.10.10), and command by one or two prefects then remained the norm throughout the praetorians' history. From the beginning these prefects were among the most important men in the empire, and from the second half of the first century the praetorian prefecture was the summit of an equestrian career.

Unlike the tribunes of the legions, praetorian tribunes were normally highly experienced men who had served as centurions in the guard or perhaps in the legions, served in the First Cohort of a legion and risen to be *primi pili*, and then returned to Rome to hold tribunates in the *vigiles*, urban cohorts and the praetorians in turn for a year at a time. Those who then returned to the legions as *primi pili bis* and *praefecti castrorum* formed an important link of loyalty to the emperor. As with the legions, praetorian centurions were appointed either from *principales* of the guard who had risen from the ranks or from men of equestrian rank. *Principales* and *immunes* were broadly similar to those of the legions.

²⁰ Birley (1981); the same status was sometimes given to retiring *principales* of the urban cohorts.

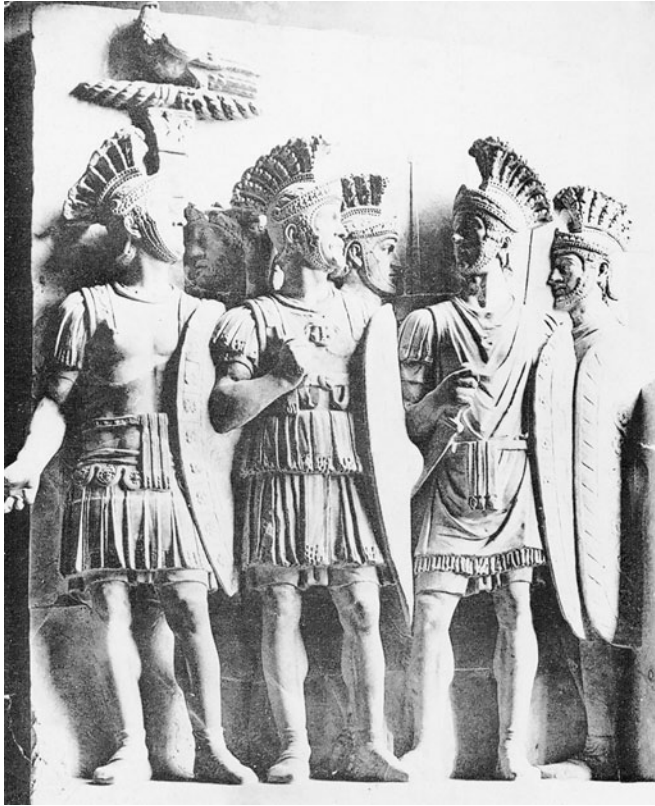


Figure 2.2 A famous sculpture of the praetorian guard, whose main role was not as a military élite but as political power-brokers at the heart of the Empire.

Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.5) tells us that in the early Principate, under Tiberius, the praetorians were recruited in Etruria, Umbria and Latium, and Dio (75.2.5) that in the late second century they came exclusively from Italy, Spain, Macedonia and Noricum (modern Austria), that is from the most prosperous and Romanized parts of the western empire. These observations are generally confirmed by the inscriptional evidence (see fig. 2.2).

A key turning point in the history of the praetorians came in AD 23 when their ambitious sole prefect, L. Aelius Sejanus (generally known as Sejanus), persuaded the emperor Tiberius to concentrate all nine cohorts in a camp just outside the north-eastern section of the *pomerium* (Tac. *Ann.* 4.2; Suet. *Tib.* 37.1; Dio Cass. 57.19.6). The first stone camp appears to have been built by Claudius, and the praetorians continued to be housed in successive camps on this site throughout their history. They were soon

revealed as a potential danger to the emperor himself should he lose their loyalty. Sejanus almost seized the throne before falling from power in AD 31, praetorian tribunes led the conspiracy which killed Caligula in AD 41 and it was the desertion of the corps which forced Nero to commit suicide in AD 68. The praetorians also soon realized their king-making potential, proclaiming Claudius as Caligula's successor, ensuring the accession of Galba after Nero's death and then lynching him in favour of Otho when he failed to reward them. When Otho was in turn overthrown by Vitellius, the new emperor executed their centurions and disbanded the cohorts, replacing them with sixteen new cohorts, each 1,000 men strong, drawn from members of his own German legions. The dismissed praetorians soon joined a new pretender, Vespasian, and became the backbone of his army.

The legacy of AD 68–9 was that the political importance of the praetorians and their commanders could never again be overlooked. When Vespasian reduced the guard to nine milliary cohorts packed with his own supporters, he gave command not to an equestrian officer but to his own son, Titus, the heir to the throne. Nothing could have signalled more clearly the importance of the guard to the new dynasty, and it remained fiercely loyal to Vespasian, Titus and Titus' brother and successor Domitian, who made much use of it as an élite force in his wars on the German and Danube frontiers. After Domitian's murder in a palace coup in AD 96 the guard intimidated his successor Nerva, who had been chosen by the Senate. Nerva had to counter by adopting the governor of Upper Germany, Trajan, as a way of maintaining his own position by threatening vengeance from the German armies for any move against him. When Nerva died early in AD 98 Trajan executed the praetorian prefect and other officers of the Guard, but subsequently took care to rehabilitate the cohorts by giving them a prominent role in the Dacian Wars of AD 101–2 and 105–6. He also celebrated their victories on numerous public monuments, not least the great column he erected in his new forum in the centre of Rome.²¹

2. *The urban cohorts*

If the praetorians fulfilled all the traditional roles of a guards unit – ceremonial escort and palace protection unit in the capital and élite striking force in the field – their police function in Rome was complemented by the urban cohorts (*cohortes urbanae*). Three such cohorts were created around AD 13 to assist the prefect of the city (*praefectus urbi*), a very senior senator newly appointed to maintain order in the city of Rome (Tac. *Ann.* 6.11). The cohorts were numbered consecutively after the praetorian cohorts, i.e. initially X, XI and XII, but they were renumbered as the number of

²¹ Durry (1938); Passerini (1939); Rankov (1994).

praetorian cohorts varied. They were also housed in the praetorian camp, not receiving their own separate camp until some time in the third century. Since the number of praetorian cohorts seems to have dropped at around the same time from eleven or twelve down to nine, it may be that, instead of recruiting new cohorts, Augustus simply renamed the three newest praetorian cohorts.

The urban cohorts were equipped, organized and commanded in exactly the same manner as the praetorians, and recruited from the same areas, but their conditions of service were a little less favourable, albeit still superior to those of the legions, since they served for twenty years. Further urban cohorts were added over time, and by the middle of the first century AD there was a new cohort at Ostia, the port of Rome, and another at Puteoli (Pozzuoli) in the bay of Naples. Vespasian brought the Rome contingent up to four cohorts, probably milliary, and installed one cohort at Carthage, the capital of the senatorial province of Africa, and one at Lugdunum (Lyons), the capital of Gallia Lugdunensis and the site of an imperial mint.²²

3. *The vigiles*

Somewhat different from the praetorian and urban cohorts were the *vigiles*, established by Augustus to act as a fire brigade for Rome, after various civilian types of organization had proved unsatisfactory. Provision of a fire brigade was a politically sensitive issue, and Augustus had been embarrassed early in his reign by one senator's attempt to use it to gain political advancement. The creation of the *vigiles* as a para-military force in AD 6 after a series of disastrous fires should also be seen in the context of other developments at this date, when Augustus was putting the financing of Rome's military forces on a stable footing wholly under his own control.

The *vigiles* were organized in seven cohorts, one for every two of the city districts (*regiones*) created by Augustus, and each cohort was divided, uniquely, into seven centuries. What was really distinctive about the *vigiles* was that they were initially recruited from the freedmen (ex-slaves) of the capital. Over time, however, more and more free-born men joined, especially from Africa and the east, and by the third century AD they probably made up the majority. As with other military units, *immunes* and *principales* were appointed by internal promotion. Centurions, however, were normally drawn from other units, especially those in the capital, and the tribunes in command of each unit were former *primi pili* in the legions who would subsequently go on to tribunates of an urban and then of a praetorian cohort. The commander, the *praefectus vigilum*, was a very senior Roman knight appointed by the emperor, who was expected to perform his

²² Freis (1967).

duties through the night. Several of these prefects subsequently progressed to the command of the praetorians.

Each cohort appears to have had its own barracks (*castra*) in a particular area of Rome, with additional outposts (*excubitoria*). There were also detachments at Ostia and apparently at Pozzuoli. From these barracks the cohorts fought fires in the two regions to which each was assigned. The most recent study of the *vigiles*, by Sablayrolles, has, however, argued that their primary function was fire prevention, by patrolling the city at night on the look out for potential fire hazards. In addition, they dealt with any minor criminal activity which they encountered. The criminals they arrested were brought before the prefect, with the result that, like the praetorian prefect and the prefect of the city, he became one of the chief judges in the capital.

Unlike the other military units in the capital, the *vigiles* never served in the field. They were, however, militarily trained and were frequently involved as troops in the upheavals of the capital. Most famously, they were employed by their commander, M. Sutorius Macro, to arrest Sejanus in AD 31, but they also took part in the fighting in the capital in AD 69, and again in the second 'Year of Four Emperors' in 193.²³

4. *The equites singulares Augusti*

During the first century the emperors maintained a small personal escort of mounted troops, known as *speculatores*, presumably because they originated in the squadrons of scouts employed by Republican commanders. In addition, an informal unit of German bodyguards (*Germani corporis custodes*), who had their own camp outside Rome across the Tiber, provided personal protection for the emperors while in the capital, but also accompanied them as cavalry in the field.²⁴ The *speculatores* were always closely associated with the praetorians, and by the second century AD at least (if not from the beginning) were fully integrated as cavalrymen within the centuries of the individual cohorts (just like legionary cavalry).²⁵ The Germans were dismissed by Galba in AD 68, and it is not clear whether they were reconstituted by the Flavians.

At the end of the first century, however, a new cavalry guard unit appears, the *equites singulares Augusti*. It may owe its origin to the emperor Domitian, but the most likely context for its creation is the beginning of Trajan's reign, after he executed the ringleaders of the praetorian intimidation of Nerva. It was already well-established custom for provincial governors to form a cavalry guard (*equites singularis consularis*) by seconding the best men from

²³ Baillie Reynolds (1926); Rainbird (1976); Sablayrolles (1996).

²⁴ Bellen (1981); Speidel (1984b), (1994) 12–31.

²⁵ Dury (1938) 108–10; Clauss (1973) 46–58; Speidel (1994) 33–5.

the auxiliary cavalry units (*alae*; see pp. 54–5 below) of their own armies,²⁶ and it may be that Trajan simply took with him first to the Danube and then to Rome the *equites singulares* of the two German armies. They were then established as a permanent unit with its own camp on the Caelian hill, and continued to be recruited mainly from the *alae* of the German provinces, especially the Batavians who had formed the backbone of the *Germani corporis custodes* in the Julio-Claudian period.²⁷

Those selected to join the *equites singulares Augusti* would have served out the remainder of their original twenty-five-year enlistment in the capital, but unlike those they left behind they would have been granted immediate Roman citizenship. They were probably 1,000 in number and would have been equipped and organized like a regular *ala*. Members of this force of *singulares* were often subsequently appointed to officer posts in units around the empire. The commander – usually a high flier – was an equestrian tribune, who may have been subject to the praetorian prefect, and who would normally go on to command an urban and then a praetorian cohort. The unit acted in the field as a cavalry escort for the emperor, and as such presumably took part in Trajan's Dacian Wars and certainly accompanied Hadrian on his tour of the eastern empire in AD 130.²⁸

IV. THE AUXILIA

Under the Republic Rome's allies had supplied both heavy infantry similar to the legions and cavalry and light infantry to supplement those of the legions (see vol. 1, pp. 3–30, 335–6). At first these allied troops were mainly Italians, but as time went on they were supplemented or replaced by Numidians, Spaniards, Gauls and Germans in the west and by the forces of local client kings in the east. In addition, there were specialist troops such as archers from Crete and slingers from the Balearic islands.

In the middle Republic groups of allies would fight on the wings (*alae*) of the Roman battle line under the command of specially appointed *praefecti*. By the late first century BC the term *cohors* had come to be used for a specifically infantry unit (although cohorts with both infantry and cavalry elements appear from the early first century AD), while *ala* was used only

²⁶ Speidel (1978a).

²⁷ Trajan may also have established the nearby *castra peregrina* ('foreigners' camp') on the same hill. This camp housed another unit of men seconded from the provinces, the *numerus frumentariorum*. The *frumentarii* were legionaries who carried messages between the provincial governors and the emperor, and Trajan may have wanted to get them away from the praetorian camp where they had probably been billeted up to this time. By the early third century, they appear to have been acting as a sort of secret service, involved in internal espionage and political assassinations. See Baillie Reynolds (1923); Claus (1973) 82–113; Mann (1988); Rankov (1990).

²⁸ Speidel (1965), (1993), (1994).

for cavalry. When Augustus created the standing army after the defeat of Antony some of the auxiliary units which had fought in the civil wars were kept on as permanent contingents, as some of the legions had been. New units of *auxilia* were then raised as the provinces took shape under Augustus, especially those of the northern frontier.

The most important distinction between the *auxilia* and the legions was that the former normally consisted of non-Roman citizens, although some Roman citizens did join auxiliary units and a few volunteer citizen cohorts were raised from time to time. Already in the late Republic Marius (Cic. *Ballb.* 46; Val. Max. 5.2.8) and the father of Pompey the Great (*ILS* 8888) had obtained the citizenship for members of allied units which had distinguished themselves, and this practice continued into the Principate. Then, from the time of the emperor Claudius, who set thirty years as the maximum term of service, auxiliary soldiers of good character were automatically given citizenship after twenty-five years. In addition, they received the right of *conubium*, which legitimized any informal union with a woman (Augustus had forbidden soldiers to marry), so that any children born after the man had joined the army were Roman citizens also.

These grants were recorded on bronze tablets attached to temples in Rome. Individual auxiliary soldiers could purchase a copy in the form of a pair of bronze tablets which are referred to by modern scholars as *diplomata*. The tablets were wired together and sealed, with the text of the grant inscribed on both the inner and outer faces to prevent forgery. Several hundred such *diplomata* have survived, most of them in fragmentary condition. They are invaluable for our knowledge of the Roman army, since each lists a number of auxiliary units, all from the same province, in which the emperor authorized the grant of such privileges, as well as the name of the governor and much other useful information. In the later first century twenty-five years became the normal term of service for auxiliaries, and from the time of Trajan, diplomas were issued only to men who had already been discharged. From AD 140, for reasons which are not entirely clear, only the children born after a man had been discharged benefited from the grant. Roman citizenship was a highly valued prize, which seems to have been given to auxiliaries in place of a monetary discharge bonus, and such grants were highly effective both in maintaining recruitment and in spreading the citizenship throughout the empire.²⁹

Auxiliary units were initially commanded by, and often named after, former centurions or legionary tribunes (and in addition Augustus is said to have appointed pairs of young aristocrats to joint command of single *alae*, to ensure that they had military experience before they entered the Senate: Suet. *Aug.* 38.2). The commander might also be a local tribal leader:

²⁹ Eck and Wolff (1986).



Figure 2.3 Scene from Trajan's column depicting Numidian light cavalry, which played a prominent role against the Romans and later in Roman auxiliary service from the Second Punic War onwards.

for instance the *ala Indiana Gallorum*, which later served in Germany and Britain, was probably raised by Iulius Indus, a noble of the Treveri tribe around Trier, who stayed loyal to Rome during the Gallic revolt of AD 21 (Tac. *Ann.* 3.42). Later, unit names tended to reflect the area of recruitment: for instance *cohors IX Batavorum*, which was raised from German tribesmen, is known from the famous wooden tablets found there to have garrisoned Vindolanda in northern Britain at the end of the first century AD, and is subsequently recorded in Raetia and Dacia. Members of such ethnic units often continued to be recruited from the home region, even when the unit had been posted to another province (e.g. fig. 2.3). This was especially true where the troops had a specialist function. Batavian cavalry, for instance, growing up around the mouth of the Rhine, were famous for being able to cross rivers swimming alongside their horses, while the Hamian archers who served on the northern frontier of Britain were drawn from Syria throughout the unit's history. Even with less specialized troops, only after a unit had been part of a provincial garrison for a considerable period were numbers maintained by local recruitment.

For a time, and while the units retained a strong ethnic identity, the practice of having them commanded by tribal chieftains who had been given Roman citizenship continued. Tacitus specifically says this of Batavian cohorts (*Hist.* 4.12–13), and this may possibly be reflected in one of the Vindolanda tablets in which a decurion named Masclus addresses Flavius Cerealis, the prefect of *cohors IX Batavorum*, as 'his king' (*regi suo*).³⁰ However, this sometimes facilitated revolt, especially during the troubles of AD 69–70, and it then became the norm to employ equestrian officers from around the empire (former legionary centurions now tended to go on to the Rome tribunates instead). Roman knights who wished to pursue a career

³⁰ Bowman and Thomas (1996) 323–6.

in the service of the emperor were required first to serve in a succession of auxiliary commands, each for up to three years (prospective senators needed to serve only a single year as a legionary tribune).

Claudius determined that such officers should first serve as prefect of a cohort, then as prefect of an *ala* and then as equestrian tribune of a legion before they became eligible for one of the procuratorships in the imperial household or other senior equestrian posts (Suet. *Claud.* 25.1). The sequence of the 'equestrian military service' (*militia equestris*) which became established after his reign, however, was prefecture of a cohort, followed by a tribunate, followed by prefecture of an *ala*. While Claudius' sequence may have been determined by his perception of the relative status of the units – cohort, *ala*, legion – the later sequence probably reflects the relative level of responsibility involved (commanding an *ala* was presumably more demanding than being one of five mid-ranking officers in a legion).³¹ Eric Birley calculated that in the mid-second century only two-thirds of those who held prefectures of cohorts or the equivalent would progress to be tribune of a milliary auxiliary or of a legionary cohort, and only half of those (one-third of the original group) would become prefect of an *ala*.³²

As in the legions individual centuries of auxiliary infantry were commanded by centurions, who were either promoted internally or from legionary *principales*. They could also be appointed direct from civilian life, although most likely from the curial classes (i.e. town councillors) rather than from the Roman knights as with the legions. Cavalry *turmae* were commanded by decurions of similar rank to the centurions. The senior centurion in a unit was designated *centurio princeps*, and the senior decurion likewise *decurio princeps*, and only a very few were subsequently promoted beyond this rank (usually by transfer to a legionary centurionate).

Auxiliary units also had *principales* and *immunes*. Infantry *principales* included the *tesserarius*, the *optio* and the *signifer*, as in the legions, while the corresponding ranks in the cavalry were *sesquiplicarius* (i.e. a man with one-and-a-half times pay), *duplicarius* (a man with double pay) and *vexillarius* (who carried the *vexillum* or flag which was the standard of the whole cavalry detachment or *ala* rather than just the *signum* of a maniple or *turma*). *Immunes* were in general similar to those of the legions.³³

As time went on, quingenary cohorts and *alae* took on a more or less standardized form and size, and were supplemented from the second half of the first century by milliary units of both types.³⁴ Papyri and inscriptions

³¹ Birley (1949); Devijver (1989), (1992). ³² Birley (1969) 72.

³³ Von Domaszewski (1908, 2nd edn Dobson 1967) xvi–xvii, 53–9; Breeze (1971), (1974b), (1974a).

³⁴ Cheeseman (1914); Saddington (1975); Holder (1980); Saddington (1982).

indicate, however, that – as with the legions – paper strength hardly ever corresponded with actual strength.

1. *The cohortes quingenariae peditatae and equitatae*

Like the cohorts of the legions, quingenary infantry cohorts – *cohortes peditatae* – consisted of six centuries, nominally of 80 men each, to give a paper strength of 480 men. From the reign of Tiberius, however, when expansion of the empire came to a temporary halt and Rome's forces became more concerned with garrison and patrol duties, mixed units incorporating a cavalry element begin to appear. Such *cohortes equitatae* comprised four *turmae* of 30 or 32 cavalry each in addition to the six infantry centuries, giving a paper strength of 608 men. By the mid-second century, there were roughly the same number of infantry as there were mixed quingenary cohorts – about 130 to 135 of each, it has been estimated – and both types were commanded by *praefecti* at the first stage of the *militia equestris*.³⁵

2. *The cohortes milliariae peditatae and equitatae*

From the reign of Nero, or perhaps a little later, milliary cohorts appear in our literary and other sources. The *cohortes peditatae* consisted of ten centuries, making 800 men in total, so that they were the same size overall as the First Cohort of a legion at this time. The *cohortes equitatae* had an additional 8 *turmae* of cavalry, 256 men in all, giving a grand total of 1,056 men. Once again, the numbers of the two types of unit were more or less even, with about twenty of each, and both were commanded by *tribuni* at the second stage of the *militia equestris*, as an alternative to serving as one of the five equestrian tribunes in a legion.³⁶

3. *The alae quingenariae*

An *ala quingenaria* consisted of 16 *turmae*, giving a total of 512 men. They were commanded by *praefecti* at the third, and usually final, stage of the *militia equestris*, from which a man would, perhaps after an interval, progress to a junior procuratorship. There were about ninety such units.³⁷

4. *The alae milliariae*

At around the same time as the milliary cohorts, a very few milliary *alae* also appear. According to Ps.-Hyginus (*De munitionibus castrorum* 16) such *alae*

³⁵ Cichorius (1901); Spaul (2000).

³⁶ Cichorius (1901); Birley (1966); Spaul (2000).

³⁷ Cichorius (1894); Spaul (1994).

contained 24 *turmae*, making 768 men in all. These were clearly élite units, and by the mid-second century there were still only eight or nine of them in the entire empire. The commander was a *praefectus* who was serving in what was regarded as an exceptional fourth grade (*militia quarta*) of the *militia equestris*, and such a post was offered only to the most outstanding candidates who were destined to rise high in the imperial service.³⁸

5. *The numeri*

The later first century AD also saw the creation of some irregular formations, designated simply as *numeri* or 'units' (the term *cuneus* or 'wedge' is also found on occasion, possibly but not certainly referring specifically to cavalry units). Some were ethnic units, others were units put together from existing troops for campaign purposes, especially for scouting as *exploratores* (see pp. 82–3, 98–9 below).³⁹ Hardly anything is known about the organization of *numeri*, and the term seems to cover infantry, mixed and cavalry units indiscriminately. They appear to have had the usual centurions, decurions and various grades of *principales*, which suggests that they were formed on normal Roman army lines and were irregular mainly in not being of a fixed size. Their irregular nature was, nevertheless, recognized by the title of *praepositus* ('officer commanding') given to the legionary centurions who were put in charge while retaining their existing rank, although some of the larger units were assigned their own equestrian *praefectus* or even *tribunus*. One of the *praefecti* of the *numerus exploratorum Germanicianorum Divitiensium* is even recorded as serving a *militia quarta* in this command (*CIL* XIII 6814). Leaving aside the provincial *singulares* and the units in Rome, there were probably only about ten *numeri* by the mid-second century, most of them small units in Upper Germany, and fewer than forty are known even in the third century.⁴⁰

V. THE FLEETS (*CLASSES*)

The origins of Rome's imperial fleets were in many respects similar to those of the legions and *auxilia*. In the final bout of civil wars, Octavian's struggle against Sextus Pompeius and the sea-battle at Actium in 31 BC had highlighted the political importance of controlling the seaways of the Mediterranean, and especially the waters around Italy (see pp. 143–6 below). At the same time, Octavian had been left with some 700 ships on his hands after the final victory. Much of Antony's fleet was simply burned, but the

³⁸ Cichorius (1894); Birley (1966); Spaul (1994).

³⁹ Speidel (1983); Austin and Rankov (1995) 189–95.

⁴⁰ Von Domaszewski (1908, 2nd edn Dobson 1967) xvii–xviii, 59–61; Callies (1964); Southern (1989).

rest of the ships were sent with their crews to Fréjus (Forum Iulii) on the southern coast of Gaul (Tac. *Ann.* 4.5), where a squadron was maintained until the reign of Nero. The main Roman fleets, however, were stationed at Misenum in the bay of Naples, in part to protect the grain transports from Egypt, and at Ravenna at the head of the Adriatic.

These bases were most probably chosen for their large, safe harbours, rather than for strategic reasons, but there were also detachments of the *classis Misenatium* along the west coast of Italy at Ostia, Puteoli and Centumcellae. The Mediterranean was a Roman lake, known as *mare nostrum* or 'our sea', and the main threat was from civil strife or piracy rather than any external enemy. What mattered was for the emperor to maintain 'fleets in being', which could be used if they were needed. In the event they were not required for any major conflict until the civil wars of the early fourth century, and the fleet was mainly used for transport of the imperial family and of troops going on campaign. It is significant that a large detachment of the sailors from Misenum could be kept in Rome to stage mock sea-battles (Tac. *Ann.* 12.56; Suet. *Claud.* 12.6) and work the sun-awnings in the Colosseum (*SHA Comm.* 15.6). The sailors of the Italian and other fleets were normally, like the auxiliaries, non-Roman citizens. They even included ex-slaves and Egyptians, who were barred from serving in most other branches of the armed forces. Inscriptions show that the men of the *classis Misenatium* were recruited mostly from the eastern provinces, especially Egypt, while those of the *classis Ravennatium* came mostly from the Danube provinces.

A number of provincial fleets were also maintained. One, the *classis Alexandrina*, was based at Alexandria from the time of Augustus, and was probably a legacy of the war against Antony and Cleopatra. It too was manned by Egyptians, but only those with Alexandrian and Roman citizenship, even though ordinary Egyptians could and did join the Italian fleets. The role of the *classis Alexandrina* was probably to protect the mouth of the Nile from which the grain ships set sail for Rome, although it also operated on the river Nile from time to time. A Syrian fleet, the *classis Syriaca*, was probably based at Seleucia at the mouth of the Orontes from some time in the first century AD to protect the coastline of Syria and Judaea. After AD 44 the Alexandrine and Syrian fleets also sent a detachment to Caesarea (Cherchel), the capital of Mauretania Caesariensis in the western Mediterranean.

The other provincial fleets were all based on the northern frontiers and had their origins at the end of the first century BC and in the early first century AD. Several of them were riverine rather than sea-going, including the *classis Germanica* on the Rhine, with its main base at Cologne, the *classis Pannonica* on the middle Danube, with its main base near Belgrade (Singidunum) and the *classis Moesiaca* on the lower Danube, possibly based

around the Danube delta. The duties of such fleets were mainly ferrying and supply, although they did on occasion engage in hostilities on the river. In the Black Sea itself the navy of the kings of Pontus was reorganized as the *classis Pontica* based on the northern coast of Asia Minor and in the Crimea. In addition, a British fleet, the *classis Britannica*, was established when the province was invaded in AD 43, and had its main bases at Boulogne and Dover. Its role, too, was mainly one of transport and supply.

The main capital ship of all the fleets was the trireme, a ship rowed at three levels with a crew of around 200, although the riverine fleets consisted mostly of much smaller biremes and single-level ships. The two main fleets had a few quadriremes (a two-level ship with two men to each oar) and quinqueremes (three-level with one or two men to an oar), and the Misenum fleet had a flagship, named *Ops* ('Wealth') (CIL x 3560, 3611) which was a six (three-level, two men to an oar). We know the names of eighty-eight ships in the Misenum fleet: one six, one quinquereme, ten quadriremes, fifty-two triremes and fifteen smaller vessels (*liburnae*). Since the names may have been passed down from ship to ship, this may reflect the actual strength of the fleet, and accords with other evidence for its size. For the Ravenna fleet we know the names of two quinqueremes, six quadriremes, twenty-three triremes and four *liburnae*, which suggests that it may have been around half the size of the Misenum fleet (on vessel types, see vol. 1, pp. 357–61).

Sailors served for twenty-six years (twenty-eight in the third century) and were rewarded with Roman citizenship after that time. They were also organized much like the *auxilia*. The sailors even call themselves 'soldiers' (*milites*) on inscriptions, and no distinction appears to have been made between rowers and marines. We find the usual *immunes*, as well as *tesserarii*, *sub-optiones* and *optiones*, *signiferi* and *vexillarii*. In addition, however, we also find specifically nautical *principales*, such as *celeustae* or *pausarii* who called time to the rowers, *proretae* (bow-officers) and *gubernatores* (helmsmen). Individual ships were commanded by *trierarchi* and squadrons were commanded by a *nauarchus*, the senior of whom was the *nauarchus princeps*. All these last three appear to have ranked as centurions, and may even refer to themselves as such on occasion, although some scholars believe that the fleet *centuriones* were specifically officers of marines.

All the fleets were commanded by equestrian *praefecti*, mostly ranking with junior procurators and just above the third grade of the *militia equestris* (though under Claudius and Nero many procurators were still ex-slaves of the emperor, and some of these were given fleet commands). The involvement of the Misenum and Ravenna fleets in the Civil War of AD 68–9, however, ensured that their special importance had to be acknowledged. Vespasian gave them both the honorific title *praetoria*, and they were subsequently entrusted to equestrian prefects who ranked only just below the prefect of the *vigiles* and the other great prefectures. The prefect of the

Misenum fleet in AD 79 was the author Pliny the Elder, who died when he took his ships across the bay of Naples to rescue some friends from the eruption of Vesuvius in that year. The dramatic story is told in a letter (*Ep.* 6.16) written by his nephew, Pliny the Younger.⁴¹

VI. MILITARY DRESS AND EQUIPMENT

The study of Roman military equipment has been a growth area in recent scholarship, with far greater attention being paid to archaeological finds and to reliefs found on private funerary monuments (e.g. fig. 2.1). Inevitably the picture which has emerged is significantly more complex and less clear cut than when it was based mainly on depictions of Roman soldiers on major monuments, and in particular on those on Trajan's column in Rome (see fig. 3.2).

In some ways it is misleading to speak of uniform for the Roman army, since soldiers owned their own equipment, paid for by deductions from their pay, and those who could afford it might often buy decorative or more expensive items to make themselves stand out from their fellows. On the other hand there had to be a certain standardization of types of equipment for troops fighting together in formation. Moreover, the use of public contractors for the late Republican armies, and of local manufacturers close to or even within army camps once units had become settled on the frontiers in the early Principate, would have tended to produce an underlying uniformity, at least within individual units or provincial armies (see pp. 167–9 below). Roman soldiers on parade would thus have looked generally homogeneous, while varying in detail (which is true, to some extent, even of modern armies).

The basic 'uniform' of the ordinary late Republican legionary was the standard male dress of an undyed woollen tunic, but worn in military fashion, adjusted with a belt to mid-thigh rather than to knee length.⁴² A simple cloak (*sagum*) was fastened round the neck with a brooch. As footwear, soldiers wore hobnailed open-work sandals.

In battle the legionary protected himself with a helmet and a thigh-length cuirass made of scale armour (*lorica squamata*) or of ringmail (*lorica hamata*) worn with the belt over it to transfer some of the weight from the shoulders to the hips. The mail cuirass, which was ultimately of Celtic origin, had doubled shoulder-pieces, which betrays a concern with protecting the wearer from slashing blows from above. The helmet was of the Montefortino, Coolus or similar type, a hemispherical bowl of copper alloy with a projecting neck-guard at the rear and separate cheek-guards at the side, and surmounted by a knob from which a horsehair crest could be hung.

⁴¹ Starr (1941, 2nd edn 1960); Kienast (1966); Viereck (1975); Reddé (1986); Rankov (1995).

⁴² Fuentes (1987).

Further protection was afforded by the convex, oblong legionary shield known as the *scutum*, which was made of plywood, covered in leather, and had a central boss and edging of iron (cf. Polyb. 6.23). Greaves to protect the shins were worn by centurions, possibly as a mark of rank.

Offensive weapons included two *pila* or javelins, one light and one heavy. These had an iron head with a long, thin shank fitted into a wooden shaft, which was designed to pierce shield and armour. The sword used was of a Spanish type, the *gladius Hispaniensis*, which was shorter than the long Celtic slashing-sword. Its shortness allowed it to be worn suspended from a waist-belt (*balteus*) or a baldric on the right side of the body, and to be drawn overarm without fouling the shield (although standard bearers and centurions, who were unencumbered with large shields, wore their swords on the left). In addition, a short dagger was worn on the left side, suspended from its own waist-belt or, later, from the same waist-belt as the sword.

With some modifications, this remained the basic equipment of the legionary until the late second century AD. A purely ornamental addition during the first century AD was the apron of leather strips decorated with studs which hung down from the belt in front of the groin. Experiment has shown that these can have offered no protection to that area, as was once thought, and it is now believed that it was worn as a sign of military status, which would jangle as the soldier marched. For campaigning in cold climates, leggings (*bracae*) were adopted which reached over the knee, while one of the Vindolanda tablets (*T.Vindol.* II.346) reveals that troops in northern Britain even wore underwear (*subligaria*). There is also evidence for the wearing of sandals over open-toed and open-heeled socks. From the early Principate, alongside the *sagum*, a hooded cape (*paenula*), open at the front, began to be worn in bad weather.

The major change, or rather addition, to defensive equipment in the early Principate was the segmented cuirass (referred to by modern scholars, but not in any ancient text, as the *lorica segmentata*), which began to be worn by some legionaries (and probably some auxiliaries) from the early first century AD. Segmented armour may have been used first by gladiators and then copied from them by the military. It was made of curved iron sheets fitted on to an adjustable harness of leather straps, and may have been worn over a padded shirt. As with ringmail cuirasses, the shoulders were especially well protected. In the later first century AD some soldiers appear to have supplemented their cuirass with segmented arm-guards and occasionally even greaves.

Another change was the gradual development of the helmet to make it stronger and give more protection against attack from above. Neck-guards become much more prominent, and brow-guards and ear-protectors were added. Attachments have also been found for fixing crest-boxes, which were fitted fore and aft for ordinary soldiers. *Principales* may have been allowed

to wear feathers in special holders either side of the crest, while centurions apparently fitted their crests transversely to act as a mark of their rank, like their greaves and the vine swagger-stick they carried. Crests may have been done away with by the early second century when Roman armies encountered the fearsome Dacian *falx*, a sickle-shaped weapon which could slice through helmets and armour. Instead, cross-pieces were added to helmet bowls to help absorb blows from such weapons. Very little archaeological evidence has yet been found for the Attic-style helmets with visors and crests which are commonly depicted on public monuments, nor are there any depictions on private monuments. It has even been suggested that such helmets were never normally used by the Roman army, but were merely an artistic convention representing an idealized Greek type.⁴³

Legionaries continued to carry a large curved *scutum*, with the oblong shape giving way to the classic rectangular form which appears on Trajan's column, although an oval shape also appears. The leather outer face was painted with designs and perhaps colours which indicated the bearer's unit (cf. Tac. *Hist.* 3.23; Veg. *Mil.* 2.18). Offensive weapons, especially swords, also show changes, but it is disputed whether these were functional (e.g. making swords parallel sided to improve their slashing ability) or merely stylistic.

It is also clear that modifications could be and were made to suit the local situation or conditions, either to individual types of weapon or to the way in which whole units were equipped. We hear from Suetonius (*Dom.* 10.3) of a governor of Britain, Sallustius Lucullus, devising a new type of spear (*lancea*) around AD 90 (and being executed by the emperor Domitian for being foolish enough to name it after himself). Arrian's *Ektaxis* describes how, as governor of Cappadocia around AD 135, he repelled a charge by heavily armoured Alan lancer cavalry by arming the front ranks of his own legions with long lances (*conti*) and backing them up with archers deployed to shoot over their heads. The effectiveness of the Alan troops and of similarly armed enemies in the east and on the Danube was nevertheless recognized by the Romans, and units of similar cavalry, also armed with *conti*, begin to appear in the Roman army at precisely this time.⁴⁴

Finds of arrows and slingshots at many forts suggest that many soldiers also owned bows and slings, possibly for hunting rather than for use in battle. Vegetius (*Mil.* 1.15–16) says that some soldiers were trained to use these weapons as part of basic training. He also tells us (*Mil.* 2.25) that each legion, at least, possessed a number of artillery pieces. These were like large cross-bows, with the wooden arms fixed into torsion springs. Some (*ballistae*) were designed to shoot stones, others (*catapultae*) bolts, and parts and ammunition of both types have been found on military sites across

⁴³ Waurick (1983), (1988). ⁴⁴ Eadie (1967).

the empire.⁴⁵ Such artillery pieces varied greatly in size: a panel on Trajan's column (scene 64) shows a *catapulta* mounted on a small cart, while Tacitus (*Hist.* 3.23) records an incident involving a giant *ballista* belonging to the Fifteenth Legion at the second battle of Cremona in AD 69. The machine caused great slaughter among the Flavian troops, until two praetorians crept up and cut the mechanism at the cost of their own lives.

In addition to their weapons and armour, legionaries on the march carried a whole pack of other equipment with them, suspended from a pole over their shoulders. This included a bag for personal possessions, bronze saucepans (*paterae*) for cooking and an entrenching tool (*dolabra*) like a pick-axe whose head incorporated both a pick and an axe.⁴⁶ The latter was used for removing turf and digging trenches for temporary-camp construction (see pp. 66–7 below) or siege-works. They also carried stakes (*pila muralia*) to build a barrier in the form of *chevaux-de-frise* on top of the rampart.⁴⁷ Each *contubernium* of eight men took with it a leather tent, as shown on Trajan's column (scenes 8 and 21), which was normally carried on the back of a mule. Fragments of such a tent have been found at Vindolanda.⁴⁸

The praetorian and urban cohorts, as heavy infantry, appear to have been equipped identically to the legions. Auxiliary equipment was different to some extent, although it tended to converge with legionary equipment over time. In the late Republic, while Italian allies had been equipped in the same way as the Roman legions, ethnic auxiliaries had worn the gear traditional to their region of origin. This continued to be the case for specialist units such as archers and slingers, while Gallic and Germanic *auxilia* would in any case have been using some equipment which had itself been adopted by Roman legions.

The main differences were that auxiliary infantry appear to have used flat rather than curved shields, which were oval or hexagonal in shape, and that they were equipped with two spears with short, leaf-shaped iron heads, which could be used either for throwing or stabbing. This equipment presumably allowed auxiliaries to fight in a looser order than the legions, whose shields allowed them to fight in a dense, mutually supportive line in which each man could concentrate on the opponent immediately to his right (see pp. 167–9 below). Auxiliary cavalry (like other cavalry) necessarily used a long slashing sword (*spatha*), and are depicted as using both a spear and a bundle of short, light javelins (or later perhaps a *contus* wielded with both hands). Cavalry also had distinctive helmets with cheek-pieces which enclosed the ear. Trajan's column shows both cavalry and infantry wearing ringmail cuirasses as an artistic convention to distinguish them from legionaries and praetorians, but they certainly used scale armour as

⁴⁵ Marsden (1969); Baatz (1994) 113–304. ⁴⁶ Fuentes (1991).

⁴⁷ Gilliver (1993). ⁴⁸ Van Driel-Murray (1990).

well, and perhaps even segmental armour, since pieces of *lorica segmentata* have frequently been found in auxiliary forts.⁴⁹

While the rank of centurions was marked by modifications and additions to the ordinary soldier's uniform, senior officers, from auxiliary prefects right up to the emperor himself, all wore a distinctive uniform borrowed from the Greek generals of the Hellenistic era. This consisted of a muscled cuirass with front and back plates tied at the sides, and with shoulder plates tied down to rings attached to the breast plate. It was worn over a woollen tunic and a special padded leather tunic with strips of leather (*pteryges*) hanging down at the shoulders and from the waist to the knee. A band of cloth was tied round the cuirass at breast level, with an elaborate bow at the front, and an ornamental dagger, known as a *parazonium* (Mart. 14.32), was suspended alongside it on the left side. The uniform was finished off by leather ankle boots and a large military cloak (*paludamentum*) fixed around the neck with a brooch. For senatorial officers the cloak was bright red, dyed with the blood of the cochineal beetle, while the emperor's cloak was of purple. This uniform remained essentially unchanged from the mid-Republic until the late Empire.

In contrast, ordinary military dress saw rapid stylistic and some functional change during the second and third centuries. This was partly the result of contact with the Germanic peoples north of the Danube during the major wars which began in the 160s and continued right through the third century and beyond. In the course of the second century, the *paenula* cape gave way entirely to the *sagum*, which was often fringed, and the *caliga* sandal was replaced with a soft leather boot. Refinements are seen in both scale and segmental armour, while helmet cheek-pieces became larger to give added protection to the face. Swords appeared with ring-shaped pommels, and were now commonly suspended from a baldric which ran through a characteristic slide runner attached to the scabbard. Despite these changes, the basic infantry equipment of *scutum*, javelins and short sword remained in use, and it was only at the end of the second century AD that significant functional alterations to these took place.

By the beginning of the third century the short stabbing sword had disappeared and the longer *spatha* was being used by both legionaries and *auxilia*, presumably because a predominantly slashing weapon had been found to be more effective against both the spear-wielding Germanic tribesmen and the heavy lancers of the great Hungarian plain and the Syrian desert. Because of its length it was universally carried on the left side and suspended from a broad leather baldric, with elaborate metal fittings, running through a scabbard slide. Although the *scutum* did not disappear entirely, as shown by a spectacular third-century example found preserved at Dura-Europus

⁴⁹ Maxfield (1986).

in Syria, most troops appear to have adopted an oval type which was only slightly dished and may have been easier to use with a *spatha* drawn from the left side.

Thus, by the third century, there may have been relatively little difference between the equipment, and presumably also the fighting styles, of legionaries and *auxilia*. Oddly it was at one time thought that helmets and body armour disappeared at about the same time. This was because private tombstones of this period tend to depict the deceased soldier wearing only tunic and cloak, and equipped only with a sword and shield. The abandonment of all protective equipment is inherently unlikely, and it has now been recognized that there is ample archaeological and iconographic evidence to prove that both helmets and armour did survive. Indeed helmets now offered even greater protection to the face and neck, with the bowl and cheek-pieces almost enclosing the head apart from the eyes and nose.⁵⁰

VII. TRAINING, DISCIPLINE AND MORALE

One of the unifying aspects of the Roman army was its emphasis on training. Much of what we know about the basic training of the army of the Principate comes, unfortunately, from the fourth-century writer Vegetius (*Mil.* 1.9–28, 2.23–4), whose avowed agenda was to show how to restore the late Roman army to its supposed former glory. There is no doubt, however, that he made use of epitomes of earlier military manuals, and where he can be checked his work is generally plausible, although unreliable in detail. Vegetius tells us that recruits were taught how to march in step and were made to run, jump and swim to build up their fitness. The last item seems to be confirmed as an approved exercise by the presence of a full-size swimming pool within the fortress of *legio II Augusta* at Caerleon in south Wales.

Recruits were also given weapons training (*armatura*), which is attested for the Roman army as early as 105 BC, when the consul P. Rutilius Rufus employed gladiators to teach the proper use of the sword to the army which C. Marius later used to defeat the Teutones and the Cimbri.⁵¹ Vegetius describes how recruits had to attack a stake with a wooden sword, and learn to throw a javelin, use a bow and a sling and vault on to the back of a horse. This involved getting seated in the leather saddle, which recent finds have shown to have had four horns which held the rider firmly in place without the need for stirrups.⁵² Exercise grounds have been identified outside a number of Roman forts⁵³ and amphitheatres, which could

⁵⁰ Robinson (1975); Bishop and Coulston (1993). ⁵¹ Val. Max. 2.3.2; Frontin. *Str.* 4.2.2.

⁵² Connolly (1987); Hyland (1990) 130–6; Dixon and Southern (1992) 70–5.

⁵³ Davies (1968a), (1974b).

have been used for the same purpose, are found outside several legionary fortresses throughout the empire.

More advanced training mentioned by Vegetius includes practising formations and manoeuvres. Josephus, a Jewish general who himself surrendered to the Roman army in AD 67, says (*BJ* 3.75) that these were particularly realistic: 'their exercises are bloodless battles, and their battles bloody exercises'. Vegetius also speaks of the entrenching and building of temporary forts, and of regular route marches with the infantry carrying full packs, as depicted on Trajan's column and just as 'Marius' mules' had done. Camp-building practice is referred to in a speech made to a cohort by Hadrian at Lambaesis in Numidia (*ILS* 2487). Practice camps of turf have also been recognized at a number of sites in Wales, often situated a few miles away from the nearest fort, as though the digging of ditches and throwing up of turf ramparts had been combined with a route march before and afterwards. Many of these camps consist only of four corners separated by gateways, which suggests that those were the features which required skill and practice to build.⁵⁴

Cavalry undertook specialized forms of training in addition to that already outlined. It is not clear that *ala* cavalry were trained any differently from cohort cavalry, even though the former were probably regarded as of higher quality and their higher pay allowed them to keep and equip their horses better (cf. Hadrian's address to the cavalry of *cohors VI Commagenorum*: *ILS* 9135).⁵⁵ The *Ars tactica* of Flavius Arrianus (also known as Arrian), who was governor of Cappadocia in the 130s AD, describes cavalry formations and exercises. These included special games (*hippica gymnasia*) involving charges and wheeling and the discharge of missiles, with the troopers and horses decked out in colourful equipment, and the men wearing helmets formed to resemble human heads. A number of such embossed helmets have been found and seem to portray both male and female figures, possibly representing Greeks and Amazons.⁵⁶ An inscription (*ILS* 2558; cf. Dio Cass. 59.9.6) contains a poem describing another exercise put on for the benefit of the emperor Hadrian in AD 118 when 1,000 Batavian cavalry put on their party-piece of swimming the Danube with their horses.⁵⁷

Training was routine in the Roman army, but some provincial governors allowed their troops to slack. It was sometimes necessary for incoming governors to enforce hard training on their soldiers in preparation for a campaign, like the great Domitius Corbulo who kept his army in Syria under canvas for the whole winter of AD 57/8 (*Tac. Hist.* 13.35). This was regarded as exceptionally tough, but Roman army discipline was always strict. Apart from administering public humiliations to delinquent soldiers, centurions

⁵⁴ Davies (1968b). ⁵⁵ Davies (1971a).

⁵⁶ Dixon and Southern (1992) 113–34; Hyland (1993). ⁵⁷ Speidel (1991).

could use the vine-stick they carried to give beatings (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 1.23). Troops could also be given extra duty, docked of their pay, reduced in rank, transferred to an inferior branch of the service, dishonourably discharged (in which case they lost their discharge bonus) or even executed. Unit punishments included being made to camp outside fortifications, decimation (i.e. the execution of every tenth man), disbandment or even being wiped from all records (*damnatio memoriae*). In practice, the harsher punishments were used only rarely, mainly for instances of desertion or mutiny. There is certainly no reason to suppose that the Roman army was exceptionally brutal in the way in which it treated its men. On the contrary it is clear that military service was regarded as an honourable profession and that soldiers expected to be treated with respect. Both training and strict discipline moreover played a part in maintaining soldiers' self-respect and morale, not least because they helped to ensure success in battle.⁵⁸

As with all military organizations, loyalty to comrades and pride in one's unit were fostered. The habit of housing men in small groups (*contubernia*), normally of eight men, within a barrack block housing their century (see p. 68 below), anticipated the modern practice of creating 'buddy-groups'. Centuries, made up of ten or so of these *contubernia*, were named after their centurion. Units had their own symbols recalling their foundation (see p. 36 above) and decorations were commemorated on their standards. They were also granted honorific titles for loyalty to an emperor or battlefield success. Thus *legio VII* became *Claudia Pia Fidelis* ('dutiful and loyal') for refusing to join a revolt against Claudius in AD 42, and *legio XIV Gemina* became *Martia Victrix* ('warlike and victorious') for its defeat of queen Boudicca in AD 61.

The cult of loyalty to the current emperor was institutionalized within the army. The military oath (*sacramentum*) of the Republic became one of personal loyalty to the emperor under the Principate. It was administered to new recruits and renewed annually by each unit in a group ceremony at the beginning of each year. Every unit had the emperor's image displayed on its own special standard which was carried into battle; the praetorians alone had the privilege of incorporating this image into their unit standards. The birthdays of earlier emperors who had achieved military glory and of all the members of the current imperial family were celebrated with sacrifices performed before the whole unit, as recorded on a calendar of such festivals preserved on a third-century papyrus known as the *Feriale Duranum*, found at Dura-Europus in Syria (*P Dura* 54 = *RMR* (1971) 117). The emperor in turn was expected to show his devotion to his soldiers. In Rome, he frequently took the opportunity to make an address (*adlocutio*) to the praetorians, and he would address the legionaries and auxiliaries

⁵⁸ Watson (1969) 117–26.

whenever he was with them, as shown on several coins and on the columns of both Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. Hadrian's surviving speech to the troops at Lambaesis has already been noted. The very title *Imperator* proclaims the emperor as a victorious general, and imperial monuments regularly depict the emperor in military dress.⁵⁹

Loyalty and morale were also maintained in time of war through the award of decorations for courage or outstanding service. This was a practice with firm roots in the Republican era. By the late Republic a variety of awards (*dona militaria*) were available, ranging from small dishes (*patellae*) and discs (*phalerae*) worn on the chest, to armlets (*armillae*) and necklaces (*torques*), to spears (*hastae*) and flags (*vexilla*), to a variety of crowns (*coronae*). Under the Republic and early Empire the different *dona* were awarded according to the deed being rewarded, but by the late first century AD *dona* were granted according to the rank of the recipient. Ordinary soldiers and *principales* received some or all of *torques*, *armillae* and *phalerae*. Centurions received all of these plus a gold crown (*corona aurea*), or when appropriate a 'rampart crown' (*corona vallaris*) for being the first man over the rampart of an enemy camp, or a 'wall crown' (*corona muralis*) for being the first man over a city wall. Centurions of the rank of *primus pilus* received a miniature spear in addition, equestrian officers a miniature spear and flag. Senatorial tribunes received two crowns, two spears and two flags, legionary legates three of each of these and consular governors and praetorian prefects four of each.

After the early Principate successful army commanders no longer received the supreme honour of an *ovatio* or a triumph, but were frequently given the right to wear the appropriate trappings (*ornamenta triumphalia*). The only award given without regard to rank was the *corona civica*, the Roman equivalent of the Victoria Cross or Congressional Medal of Honor. In practice *dona* were hardly ever given to auxiliaries or non-Roman citizens, and were in any case awarded much more sparingly than modern decorations. Awards also tended to be made most frequently during campaigns in which the emperor was present in person. Their scarcity made *dona* all the more sought after and valued by the troops.⁶⁰ The most important mechanism, however, for keeping the soldiery happy was their regular pay, supplemented by occasional donatives, and culminating in a major grant on discharge (see pp. 162–3 below).

VIII. FORTS AND FORTRESSES

Beyond paying its troops regularly the Roman army also paid a great deal of attention to their everyday security and well-being. This was partly

⁵⁹ Campbell (1984) 69–88.

⁶⁰ Maxfield (1981).

achieved by the systematic way in which the Roman army built overnight encampments when on the march. While half the army kept guard the other half would dig a defensive ditch and construct a rampart behind it, usually of turf and soil taken from the ditch. As already noted, the troops carried special stakes with them with which they formed a barrier atop the rampart. Streets had been marked out within the camp by an advance guard before the main body of troops even arrived, and the eight-man leather tents were pitched at predetermined places along them according to individual centuries and units. The whole process is described with wonder in the mid-second century BC by the Greek Polybius (6.26.10–6.34.6) and (probably) in the second century AD by Ps.-Hyginus in the *De munitionibus castrorum*.

More permanent camps on a similar plan were built for longer-term occupation or as winter quarters (*hiberna*). It is not, however, until the creation of the standing army by Augustus, when units came to be based in one place for several years at a time, that camps became permanent, albeit still being constructed of turf and wood where the terrain allowed it. On the northern frontiers in the first half of the first century AD, as the Roman army was gradually established on the line of the Rhine and Danube, legionary fortresses and auxiliary forts were constructed by individual units along the 'Roman' banks of the two rivers. After such forts had been occupied for twenty or thirty years, individual buildings within them needed repair or replacement, and from the reign of Claudius this was usually done in stone.

On the eastern frontier where, unlike on the northern frontier, long-established cities existed, troops tended to be billeted within these rather than in separate forts. This undoubtedly caused problems with discipline and control, and the eastern units gained a reputation for laxity (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 13.35), so that they too began to be moved into forts towards the end of the first century AD. Here and in north Africa, the shortage of wood and turf ensured that construction in stone tended to be the norm from the beginning. By the reign of Hadrian, this was the case throughout the empire.

In general the layout of forts and fortresses everywhere corresponded to that of the camps described by Polybius and Ps.-Hyginus, but with an infinite number of local variations. Augustan forts tended to be sited on hills and to be irregular in outline following the contours. From the early first century, however, they tended to be sited more to dominate lines of communication and to have easy access to water, while the outline almost universally followed a playing-card plan. They were usually protected by two V-shaped ditches to break up rush attacks, the outermost placed at about 30 metres from the rampart, which was the accurate killing distance for a javelin. Ramparts were surmounted by breastworks and walkways, and watchtowers were situated at intervals along them and at the four corners.

Despite a recent tendency to play down the defensibility of such fortifications and to stress that Roman forts of the Principate were not intended to operate like medieval castles, there is no doubt that the layout was meant to allow defenders on the walls to hold off a surprise attack, at least initially. The sheer size of the garrisons housed in such forts, however, meant that the normal reaction to an attack would have been to get the mass of troops out of the fort in order to counterattack in the open. This was facilitated by the presence of a gate, protected by towers, in each of the four walls, so that it was almost always possible to exit on the side away from the enemy.

A road ran around the inside of the rampart to facilitate movement, and four roads ran from the gates to the centre of the fort where the headquarters building (*principia*) was situated. The *principia* was normally constructed as a basilica with a parade ground in front of it, where the commander could address his troops from a tribunal. There was a range of offices at the rear of the basilica where the unit's records were housed and which included a shrine for the unit standards and imperial images. This layout was ultimately modelled on the civilian fora of Italy, and in turn acted as a model for the civilian fora of the western provinces. The commander's house (*praetorium*) was normally situated to one side, and other major buildings, perhaps granaries, a workshop (*fabrica*) or a hospital (*valetudinarium*) on the other.

The remaining four corners of the fort were normally taken up with barracks. These were long narrow buildings with a verandah. Each barrack housed a century (or two *turmae*), and was divided up into eight to fourteen sets of rooms, with a storage room for equipment to the front and a living room supplied with bunk beds to the rear. Each set housed a *contubernium* of up to eight men, but some sets may have been reserved for the *principales* of the century. Barracks were usually grouped in twos (recalling the old manipular grouping of two centuries), with front doors facing each other across a street where the men could be formed up to march out. Men slept, ate and socialized in their *contubernia*, cooking for themselves in large ovens let into the back of the rampart away from the barracks, for safety from fire. Latrines were also situated at the ramparts, and bath buildings were normally built outside the fort, again to avoid the risk of fire. Stables have also been identified within some forts, but relatively few, and it may be that horses were normally kept in enclosures outside.⁶¹

Centurions (or decurions) had their own houses with several rooms, situated at the end of their century's barrack nearest the rampart. In legionary fortresses the centurions of the First Cohort and the equestrian tribunes had still larger houses, while the senatorial tribune lived with the legate in his palatial *praetorium* which was built round its own courtyard.

⁶¹ Von Petrikovits (1975); Wells (1977).

The Roman fort was essentially laid out like a planned city, which is effectively what it was to its garrison. This was the base from which it trained and carried out its military duties. It was the soldiers' source of supply for food and materials, since, for logistical reasons, units were responsible for their own supply, which had to be obtained locally if possible.⁶² It was also, at least in the Principate, where most of their equipment was made and repaired, and many forts had their own workshop (*fabrica*). The *principia* was where the commander's staff (*officium*) was based. Such *officia* were vital to the efficient functioning of an army in which men served professionally, had to be paid and supplied regularly and expected to be discharged with due benefits at the proper time. It was undoubtedly the creation of permanent bases which allowed a proper military bureaucracy of this sort to develop. The unit *officia*, moreover, were the models for the *officia* of the imperial governors, which eventually administered up to three-quarters of the empire. It can be no accident that even the civilian bureaucrats of the late Empire were militarily organized and wore military uniform.⁶³

The *principia* was also the centre of the unit's religious observances, where the unit would parade to be addressed by the commander from a tribunal and observe the rites of the imperial and state cults and of the sacred standards of the legions. Roman state religion was essentially a matter of contract between the community, who offered sacrifice, and the deity, who offered protection and success. While it thus functioned as a focus of loyalty to emperor, state and unit, it had no real spiritual aspect. Individual soldiers might enter into private 'contracts' to cover themselves, erecting an altar to the local deity (*genius loci*), but for the comfort of a personal religion as we understand it they turned to eastern mystery cults such as those of Jupiter Dolichenus or Mithras. The latter was especially popular with the Roman army, and devotees constructed Mithraea outside (and sometimes inside) several forts throughout the empire, though this normally reflected private initiative rather than official sanction.⁶⁴

If the Roman army paid little attention to the troops' spiritual needs, it was extremely careful of their physical. Apart from ensuring that the men were regularly fed (a real privilege in the ancient world), and seeing to their personal hygiene with baths and latrines, the army provided outstanding medical care. The use of herbal medicines and ointments (especially for the eyes) is well attested by botanical remains and inscribed stamps and containers. Units are known to have employed wound dressers (*capsarii*), who are shown at work on one of the panels of Trajan's column, as well as

⁶² Lesquier (1918) 349–75; Davies (1969b), (1971b); Breeze (1984); Adams (1999).

⁶³ Rankov (1999).

⁶⁴ Von Domaszewski (1895); Helgeland (1978); Birley (1978); Speidel and Dimitrova-Milceva (1978); Speidel (1978b).

paramedics (*medici*) and fully qualified doctors who appear to have ranked as centurions (*medici ordinarii*). Doctors were attracted to the service by the opportunities for learning far more about anatomy than was possible in civilian practice, as noted by Celsus (*Med. pr.* 43). Both Celsus and Galen note the skill of army doctors with wounds, and finds of surgical equipment on military sites confirm the sophistication of their procedures. A number of hospitals have been identified at both legionary and auxiliary sites. The legionary *valetudinarium* at Neuss in Lower Germany had sixty small wards, one for each century, each large enough for four men (implying the expectation that a maximum of 5 per cent of the manpower would be hospitalized at any one time). Like other military hospitals it appears to have had an operating theatre.⁶⁵

The soldiers' other needs, including drink and women, were supplied by traders and others attracted by a ready-made market consisting of one of the few groups in the ancient world to receive regular pay. Their settlements or *vici* which appeared outside forts often grew into major towns, although paradoxically full civilian development tended to be inhibited until the army moved on. Legionary fortresses in particular frequently spawned conurbations which have since become major cities, including Bonn, Vienna, Budapest and Belgrade.⁶⁶

It is conventional to think of each of the forts and fortresses as being fully occupied by a single unit, but the reality is far more complex. Some were built for two units, like the first-century legionary fortress at Mainz in Upper Germany. Some, like Maryport in Cumbria, were too large, and some, like Birrens north of Hadrian's Wall, appear to have been too small for the single unit attested for them. In Britain a number of first-century 'vexillation fortresses' have been discovered which have acreage for half a legion but no more, suggesting that legions had been split into smaller battle groups (*vexillationes*) during the conquest. Tacitus tells us that when Suetonius Paulinus defeated Boudicca in AD 61 he had with him 'the Fourteenth legion and detached members of the Twentieth' (*Ann.* 14.34). The legionary fortress of *legio xx Valeria Victrix* at Chester, which had accommodation for all ten of its cohorts, is known to have housed only a fraction of that force for most of the second century, even though it remained the base of the legion throughout. And as we have already noted, *lorica segmentata*, once seen as purely legionary equipment, is frequently found in auxiliary forts, which may imply either that auxiliaries did sometimes use it or that legionaries were often housed alongside auxiliaries. All this suggests that it was quite normal for units (especially legions) to operate in sub-groups, both on campaign and in order either to garrison the

⁶⁵ Davies (1969c), (1970). ⁶⁶ MacMullen (1963) 119–32; Vittinghoff (1968); Sommer (1984).

many small fortlets known to us or to supplement the garrisons of larger forts.⁶⁷

It is almost impossible to explain this fragmentation in detail. Permanent forts were established in particular places for a variety of reasons: to patrol frontiers, defend river crossings, police local tribes, simply to spread the burden of supplying and feeding the army or for any combination of these reasons. The exact size and layout of the forts and their garrisons would have been determined by local requirements at the time of building, and both forts and garrisons would have undergone modifications as those requirements changed. As with modifications of equipment, such decisions would have been taken mostly by local commanders at governor or even junior level, once again reflecting the overall flexibility of the Roman army.⁶⁸

IX. LATE-SECOND/THIRD-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

Although the Roman army evolved steadily during the first two centuries AD, there were no really major structural changes to compare with the Marian reforms and the Augustan revolution. However, towards the end of the second century and at the beginning of the third, the pace of change began to accelerate under the pressure of external threat and internal discord.

On the basis of the estimates for unit numbers given above,⁶⁹ in the middle of the second century the paper strength of the twenty-eight legions, the praetorian and urban cohorts, and the *equites singulares Augusti*, was approximately 160,000 men, of whom some 5,000 were cavalry. This was supplemented by approximately 156,500 auxiliary infantry, 27,500 cohort cavalry and 53,000 *ala* cavalry. This gives a total paper strength for the regular Roman army (excluding the *vigiles*, the *numeri* and the fleets) of around 311,500 infantry and 85,500 cavalry. The percentage of cavalry is very high, at well over 20 per cent.

It is often assumed that units were normally under strength, but this was not always the case: *cohors xx Palmyrenorum milliaria equitata* appears to have had 1,210 men on its books in AD 219, although its paper strength should have been only 1,056 (*P Dura* 100 = *RMR* (1971) 1). Even under strength the size of the army was a considerable economic strain on the empire (see pp. 173–6 below), and there is no doubt that the wars of the late second and third centuries produced a considerable increase in the overall number of units in the Roman army.

Two new legions – II and III *Italica* – were raised by Marcus Aurelius, largely from Italians, and three more – I, II and III *Parthica* – by Septimius

⁶⁷ Bishop (1999); see pp. 278–9 below. ⁶⁸ A. Johnson (1983).

⁶⁹ Based on Hassall (2000) 332–4, but generally corresponding with Birley (1969) 72. MacMullen (1980) gives a similar estimate of overall troop numbers.

Severus, bringing the total to thirty-three.⁷⁰ New *auxilia* were raised in proportion. The legions were recruited (or conscripted) from scratch, as were some of the *auxilia*, but some *numeri* were scraped together from the men seconded from other units for a particular campaign, like the *exploratores Germanici* (see p. 55 above), and then made permanent. Sometimes the governor's *equites singulares*, themselves seconded from the provincial *alae*, were formed into a permanent *ala* and dispatched elsewhere. We do not know if the losses to the original units were made good in such cases by fresh recruitment, but this must have become more and more difficult to achieve as the empire's manpower became stretched to its limit. At the same time the practice intensified of dispatching vexillations around the empire to deal with the latest threat, and by the later third century some of these appear to have become permanently detached from their mother units, whose names they nevertheless retained.⁷¹ We cannot track the process in detail but it would appear that a combination of such factors led, in the course of the third century, to legions, cohorts and *alae* which had only a fraction of the personnel of their first- and second-century counterparts. This makes it very difficult to determine whether the Roman army actually grew in size from the second to the third century AD, or whether it had more units but maintained the same number of troops or even shrank (see pp. 278–9, 284–5 below).

Another phenomenon, which is first seen during the Marcomannic Wars but then rapidly develops, is the emergence of successful equestrian officers who enjoy extended military careers rather than being promoted to 'civilian' procuratorships. One such was M. Valerius Maximianus, who in addition to going through the four *militiae* under Marcus, was put in charge of a number of task forces on the Danube, went on to senior procuratorships in areas of active warfare and was then promoted to the senate, commanding several legions and eventually becoming governor of Numidia and consul (*AE* 1956.124). The result was the emergence in the late second and early third century of a number of high-ranking equestrian officers who were virtually military 'professionals'. Some of them even rose from the ranks.

Further changes were brought about as a result of the civil wars which broke out after the murder of Marcus Aurelius' son Commodus on the last day of AD 192. When Septimius Severus eventually defeated his rivals, the praetorians who had previously auctioned the throne had to be dealt with and his own troops, especially the Danubian legions, had to be rewarded. The existing praetorians were therefore humiliated, dismissed and replaced with his own legionaries. Henceforth the guard was recruited from men

⁷⁰ Mann (1963). ⁷¹ Saxer (1967).

who had already served a number of years in the legions, and were mostly from the Danube. Severus' contemporary, the senator and historian Cassius Dio, complains that he had filled Rome with 'a motley bunch of soldiers, who were fierce to look at, frightful to hear and rustic in behaviour' (75.2.6). Their years in the legion counted towards their total length of service, which was probably raised to eighteen years. It has also been suggested that cohort strength was now doubled to around 1,500, but there is no good evidence for this although it may have been the case for the urban cohorts (cf. Dio Cass. 55.24.6).⁷²

Like Trajan Severus may have brought with him his *singulares* as governor in Pannonia and added them to the *equites singulares Augusti*. Their numbers were certainly doubled at this time and Severus built a new fort (*castra nova*) under a separate tribune for the extra troopers, situated next to the old fort (*castra priora*) on the Caelian hill.⁷³ He also raised three new legions commanded by equestrian prefects, of which two (*I* and *III Parthica*) were used to garrison the new province of Mesopotamia, and the third (*II Parthica*) returned with Severus to Italy in AD 202 and was installed in a new fortress in the Alban hills outside Rome. Severus thus surrounded the capital with a force of 8,000 praetorians, 6,000 urban troops, 5,000 legionaries and 2,000 *equites singulares Augusti*, the numerical equivalent of four legions. Not only did this make him much more secure against any potential provincial usurper, it also greatly strengthened the central striking force available to the emperor and anticipated the fourth-century development of the central field armies (see pp. 272–6 below).⁷⁴

The Severan dynasty nevertheless fell in AD 235, and there followed fifty years of immense turbulence which saw at least twenty-one legitimate emperors and several usurpers, many of them career soldiers. The army was stretched to the limit by continuous warfare, both external and civil. Armies and task forces were put together from vexillations to deal with crisis after crisis, and a new title appears, borrowed from the Republican era, for equestrian officers put in charge of these, that of *dux* ('leader').⁷⁵ Cavalry (see fig. 2.4) became an increasingly important arm because of its mobility, and Gallienus put together at Milan a massive mobile force of irregular cavalry units (*equites*), using men seconded from the provincial armies, like the *equites Delmetae* from Dalmatia. A number of special gold coins found in northern Italy, whose legends appeal to the loyalty of the Rhine and Danube legions, suggest that he also maintained legionary vexillations in the area. This was in addition to the praetorians and *legio II Parthica*, and further extended the notion of a central army.

⁷² Kennedy (1978); *contra* Cowan (2002). ⁷³ Speidel (1994) 57–60.

⁷⁴ Birley (1969); Smith (1972a). ⁷⁵ Smith (1972b).



Figure 2.4 Scene from Trajan's column depicting Roman cavalry pursuing heavily armoured horsemen equipped with bows. The rise of effective cavalry among Rome's opponents was a significant challenge to the infantry-based warfare of the legions, and prompted the Romans themselves to place growing emphasis on horsemen from the third century AD onwards.

Gallienus was also responsible for two significant changes which recognized the standing of the equestrian officer class. Senators were now excluded by law from holding army command (Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 33.34), and a new body of imperial staff officers was created, known as *protectores divini lateris* ('protectors of the imperial flank'). Governors had had *protectores*, who seem to have been simply senior bodyguards, since earlier in the third century, but Gallienus gave the title to middle-ranking equestrians such as praetorian tribunes or legionary prefects (i.e. commanders) who were marked out for higher command; later on, centurions were also appointed. In the fourth century the corps became highly prestigious as the *protectores domestici*, and their commander was one of the most important military officers in the empire.⁷⁶

Under the emperor Aurelian construction was begun on the walls of Rome itself, more than 12 miles long with projecting towers to allow artillery to shoot along them. Significantly, it is around the same period that external towers begin to be added to existing forts and fortresses and to be incorporated into the design of new ones, as for instance in the so-called 'Saxon shore' forts at Burgh Castle and Richborough. By the end of the third century external towers were a standard feature of forts and walls throughout the empire, which suggests a change of mentality from one in which the army moved out to fight to one in which they sought to defend themselves within the walls. That in turn accords with the decline in unit size which is suggested for the third century and confirmed for the fourth by our other evidence.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Jones (1964) 53–4; de Blois (1976) 85, 106; Speidel (1986).

⁷⁷ S. Johnson (1983); Maxfield (1989b).

Despite the problems with our sources, it is just about possible to discern a number of important changes in the Roman army in organization, equipment and fortification at this period. These show a clear line of development from the second-century and even the Augustan army, but they also point the way to the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine over the next half century which created the late Roman army (see chapter 8 in this volume).

CHAPTER 3

WAR

ADRIAN GOLDSWORTHY

Two parties are needed to fight a war, and both have motives. While a war is being fought the aims of both sides will change in accordance with developments in the field, and whatever is achieved may be completely different from what was anticipated. Nor is it necessarily true that a consensus exists on each side as regards aims and methods. All this may seem commonplace. It is, however, often ignored by the historians of the Principate.¹

This chapter will discuss the types of war fought by the Roman army in the late Republic and Principate. It will consider the context in which these conflicts occurred, their frequency, duration, decisiveness and results. Yet, although our main theme is Roman warfare, we should never forget Isaac's point that any conflict involves at least two sides. The Romans did not wage war in a vacuum, but against opponents who had their own reasons for fighting and their own expectations of how the conflict would be fought and what its outcome should be. (In the main, Roman armies fought against foreign peoples, and civil wars will be treated separately.) The military culture and practices of Rome's opponents were as important in shaping each conflict as the behaviour of the Roman army. It is vital to study these, even though the overwhelming majority of our evidence must come from Greek and Roman accounts and such sources may contain deliberate distortions, cultural misunderstandings and straightforward errors.

Isaac was also pointing to a fundamental truth when he emphasized that war aims are frequently subject to change, and may not in any case be clear or universally held even by those fighting on the same side. The larger the scale of a conflict, and the longer its duration, the more likely that each side's objectives would alter. The eventual outcome might well not be the one anticipated by either side, and could create new problems or sources of conflict. We must be very careful not to be too rigid in our analysis of warfare in any period. Even the supposedly rational war plans of modern nations have been heavily modified by political pressure, personal rivalries, confused objectives, chance and incompetence. We should not be surprised

¹ Isaac (1992) 3.

to discover similar factors in Rome's wars, and must be careful in drawing general conclusions from particular incidents.

This discussion of Roman warfare and the Roman state's use of its military power forms part of a wider debate on the very nature of Roman society. In recent years scholars have questioned how far the Roman system can ever be understood in modern, rational terms. Roman emperors have been depicted as essentially passive, reacting to an appeal or a problem rather than actively pursuing conscious and consistent policies. The bureaucratic machinery available to administer the provinces at local and wider levels has been seen as primitive and ineffective, sometimes even as almost purely symbolic. In a similar way the empire's economy is held to have been unsophisticated, imposing severe limits on growth and prosperity. The success of Rome in creating and maintaining such a large empire, which endured for many centuries and had a profound influence on later history, cannot be doubted. However, the trend of much modern scholarship is to question whether this empire was created because of the strength of Rome's institutions or in spite of their deficiencies. The actual performance, role and capability of the professional army, apparently the most sophisticated and modern of all Roman institutions, must lie at the heart of this debate.²

I. INTRODUCTION: STRATEGY AND GRAND STRATEGY

Much of this chapter will deal with strategy, or the practical factors such as intelligence, communications and logistics which impose limits upon it. Strategy embraces all the plans, decisions and actions taken before and during the course of a campaign to achieve an army's objectives. Modern commentators have created another term, grand strategy, to define the highest level of decision making, where the leaders of the state balance political and military concerns to foster its long-term interests. This deals less with the running of a particular war, and not at all with specific campaigns, but more with how individual conflicts combined with diplomacy and politics to achieve a state's ambitions in foreign affairs. The definitions of either of these terms employed in contemporary strategic studies inevitably assume the existence of many institutions of the nation state which have no parallel in the Roman period. There is no Latin or Greek word meaning precisely the same thing as strategy, and certainly no expression equivalent to grand strategy. It is important, therefore, to consider the extent to which it is appropriate to employ these terms for the Roman period.

² E.g. Millar (1977) *passim*; Isaac (1992) esp. 5–6. For a depiction of Roman bureaucracy as inefficient, see Garnsey and Saller (1987) 20–40; for an opposing view, dealing in the main with military administration, see Rankov (1999) 15–34.

In some respects it is true that warfare has not changed throughout human history. Soldiers or warriors must eat and drink if they are to function effectively. Orders or plans, however rudimentary, need to be passed around the group if it is to move in any coordinated fashion. There are limits to the speed at which men and animals can move and severe restrictions on such movement can be imposed by physical geography, since rivers or mountain ranges may only be traversed at certain points. These are basic problems unavoidable in any sort of military operation from Caesar's conquest of Gaul to the massively larger and more complex campaigns of the twentieth-century world wars, or indeed in raids involving a dozen or so warriors mounted by Apache Indians in the 1880s or one of the 'Stone Age' tribes studied by anthropologists in New Guinea in the twentieth century.³ Technology – the improvements in transport, communications and production of material – may have altered the means of coping with these problems, but it has not solved them altogether. Yet, while the difficulties faced by armies have remained remarkably consistent throughout history, their attempts to solve these problems have differed greatly over time and from culture to culture. Wars have varied immensely in scale, type and intensity of fighting, in their original motivation and ultimate consequences. What makes military sense for real or hypothetical warfare between modern states with large, sophisticated, professional or conscript armies fighting within the context of clearly defined national boundaries and under the scrutiny of international law and opinion need not necessarily have any relevance for conflict between loosely organized tribal peoples or between Rome and its enemies.

Analogy with more recent conflicts is probably unavoidable in any consideration of Roman warfare, for there are significant gaps in the information provided by our primary sources. Few detailed accounts have survived for many of the wars of the second and third centuries AD, and for the entire Principate there is no narrative of a war with peoples outside the empire comparable in detail to Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*. There is really very little information in our literary sources to help us understand the vast amounts of archaeological and epigraphic data associated with the army's deployment on the empire's frontiers. This has given scope for some radically different interpretations of what these frontiers were for and how they worked. Although comparisons with other periods of military history have proved useful these must be employed with extreme caution and should never be given precedence over our primary sources.

More than anything else, scholarly attention has focused on the higher levels, and the vexed question of whether or not Roman emperors were

³ E.g. see Gardner and Heider (1974). Keegan (1993) deals with cultural influences on methods of waging war.

capable of devising a grand strategy for the defence of the empire. As yet no consensus has emerged, and the debate continues to rage (see pp. 3–11 above). There have been far fewer investigations of the strategy employed by Roman armies on campaign. Many have commented on particular strategic decisions made during the course of a specific campaign, but this has usually involved at best rather haphazard comparison with other Roman operations.⁴ In the sense that every strategic decision is unique, determined by the peculiar circumstances of current events and the degree of knowledge concerning these available to those making the decision (factors about which we usually have very limited and imprecise information), this treatment of each choice in isolation is justified. However, while each military situation may represent a peculiar problem, individual commanders from the same society, who achieve rank through the same selection process (whatever this may be) and with similar types and levels of experience, will tend to seek solutions in similar ways. It is to these, the common principles which underlay the army's behaviour on campaign, to which we shall now turn.

Surprisingly there have been very few attempts to examine Roman strategy in this way. This has not been for lack of evidence, for descriptions of wars figure prominently in the accounts of many Greek and Roman historians. It therefore seems appropriate to begin at the level of campaign strategy, before moving on to discuss the controversial, but also poorly documented, questions of grand strategy and frontier defence. It may also prove easier to understand some of the problems raised by the debate over these higher levels of military activity and planning, if these are considered in the light of the Roman army's performance on campaign.

II. ROMAN STRATEGY

I. Permanent factors

In the late second and first centuries BC the process through which the Roman army evolved from a citizens' militia to a professional force was completed. In the past some Roman armies had achieved exceptionally high levels of discipline and morale, most notably the legions which remained in service for a decade or more during the intensive campaigning of the Second Punic War and its immediate aftermath. These legions proved capable of complex grand tactical manoeuvres and consistently out-fought the professional soldiers of Carthage and the Hellenistic world (see vol. 1, p. 433). Yet whenever such an army was demobilized, its collective knowledge and experience were largely lost. Although individual soldiers and officers may well have seen subsequent military service, they did not do so

⁴ E.g. Maxfield (1986) 60, 70–1, (1989a) 24–5; Hanson (1987) 128.

in the same units with the same officers. Therefore each time a new army was raised by the Republic, the process of training and preparing the legions for battle had to begin afresh. The growing permanence of the legions, a process finally confirmed by Augustus, changed this, making it possible for much accumulated experience to be passed on to successive generations of recruits.

This certainly did not mean that all legions under the Principate remained permanently at the peak of efficiency, since this required extensive and successful campaigning experience. We may note Hirtius' statement that in 51 BC the Eleventh Legion was serving in its eighth campaign, but had still not yet equalled the quality of the veteran legions in the army (Caes. *B Gall.* 8.8). This was despite its having fought for most of Caesar's campaigns in Gaul, a period of far more intensive fighting than was commonly encountered by the army of the Principate. The literary ideal of the good Roman commander continued throughout this period to depict him as a man who would not risk leading his men into battle until they had undergone rigorous training.⁵ Yet it is clear that the average quality of one of the professional legions of the late Republic and Principate was higher than the average achieved by the units raised according to the old militia system. Even more significantly, the professional army displayed a far higher level of engineering skill, manifested both in its building projects and especially in a greatly increased success rate in taking fortifications (see pp. 147–55 below).⁶ This was a direct consequence of the greater continuity in personnel within the professional legions and their inclusion of specialist officers and men trained as engineers, craftsmen and artillerymen, as well as the willingness of legionaries to serve as a labour force. With the creation of the regular *auxilia* during the first half of the first century AD the quality of non-citizen troops serving with the army became far more predictable. These troops not only supplied a considerable part of the army's manpower but also supplied it with a well-disciplined and mounted cavalry arm, as well as specialist archers, slingers and some lightly armed infantry. Most Roman field armies under the Principate were well-balanced, highly flexible forces.

None of Rome's foreign enemies in this period possessed sizeable forces of well-trained professional soldiers. The Parthians and Sasanid Persians – the strongest independent kingdoms in direct contact with the Empire – had armies formed from a mixture of soldiers permanently supported in the royal household and the contingents supplied by sub-kings and noblemen. This produced heterogeneous armies, usually well provided with high-quality horsemen, but lacking effective infantry. Although the Sasanids were more skilled in this respect than the Parthians, neither could rival

⁵ Davies (1989b) 71–90.

⁶ Luttwak (1976) 40–1.

the Romans' capacity for taking fortified positions. Elsewhere the Romans faced peoples whose social organization was considerably looser. For most of the tribal peoples of Europe armies consisted of the small warrior bands permanently maintained by individual chieftains, together with much larger numbers of those free tribesmen able to equip themselves, fighting in familial or clan groupings. In most of these societies the power of a leader was marked by the number of warriors he was able to maintain in his following. Some men, such as Ariovistus, Maroboduus and Arminius in Germany, or Burebista and Decebalus in Dacia at the height of their power, seem to have controlled bands of many thousands of warriors, but more commonly these groups were numbered at most in hundreds.

There is little suggestion that even these semi-professional warriors practised anything other than individual military skills. Tribal armies were frequently large, but invariably clumsy in their movements. With very few exceptions they did not possess the capacity to supply themselves for a long campaign and were forced to disperse or starve if no result was achieved within a matter of weeks. The armies formed by rebellious populations within the provinces varied immensely. If the rebellion occurred in the earlier years of occupation, then the army might well be organized and fight according to native traditions. In provinces occupied for longer periods the population became to a greater or lesser extent demilitarized, and the rebels usually had difficulty organizing large, properly equipped and effective armies, even if they included small contingents of highly motivated individuals.⁷

In most respects the Roman army was significantly superior to any of the opponents it faced during this period. This was especially true in larger-scale actions, where discipline, drill, and command and control became more important, and in siege warfare. This gave the Roman army what Luttwak termed 'escalation dominance' over its enemies.⁸ If reasonably trained, properly supplied and competently led, all of which were usually but not invariably the case, then the Romans were more likely to win a campaign fought on anything like equal terms. As men like Lucullus, Pompey and Caesar demonstrated, well-trained legions under gifted commanders could defeat far more numerous enemies with dismissive ease. Any discussion of Rome's wars against foreign opponents in this period must bear in mind their marked technical and tactical inferiority to the Roman army. Roman commanders were usually confident, sometimes to the point of rashness.

⁷ For a discussion of Gallic, German and Parthian armies, see Goldsworthy (1996) 39–75; Kennedy (1996) 67–90, esp. 83–4. Much of the discussion of the western barbarians in late antiquity in Elton (1996b) 45–88, is also relevant for the earlier period.

⁸ Luttwak (1976) 42.

2. *Political and physical geography*

More important, there can be no doubt that the focus of Roman imperialism tended to be ethnic rather than territorial or geographic. The Romans conquered peoples, not land. This is clear from the terminology used in numerous sources. Romans talked of 'Imperium Populi Romani', the power of the Roman people, not of 'Imperium Romanum' in any geographical sense. Latin literature invariably speaks of war with a people or its king.⁹

As Isaac points out, there is no evidence for the Romans ever fighting a war simply to control territory. Wars were always fought against a human opponent, a socio-political grouping such as a tribe, kingdom or chiefdom, city-state, or an alliance of several such units. Physical barriers and difficult terrain could never be ignored, but political geography was the most important single factor in determining where Roman armies fought (see pp. 3–6, 25–8 above). Many of the boundaries between such political units are now very difficult to discern. It is virtually impossible to identify the border between the territory of two tribes archaeologically, although attempts have often been made using coin finds or pottery types, and it is in any case probable that such things were rarely static. The relationships between and possible hierarchy among some of the named groups in, for instance, the Gallic and German tribes are equally hard to discover from the surviving sources, and it is distinctly possible that the Romans had only the vaguest appreciation of such divisions. It also seems probable that these borders fluctuated with the power of individual chieftains.¹⁰ It was in this environment that the wars of this period occurred.

The modern instinct in studying a campaign is to trace its course on a map. This is useful, since no army can ignore the realities of the terrain over which it is moving; but it is also highly deceptive. Detailed, accurate maps are a very recent innovation, and even now large parts of the world remain poorly covered. Understanding the actual lie of the ground from the best of maps is also a highly specialized skill. Even where good maps are available a modern army would always hope to reconnoitre an area with men on the ground before moving through it. Most armies until well into the nineteenth century had to create their own maps before or during a campaign, this being an important function of developing the military staffs. The Romans certainly appreciated the need for topographical information in the area of a campaign, although they did not gather this into maps in the modern style. Most of the information needed by the army had to be gathered by patrols, which sometimes included senior officers and even

⁹ Isaac (1992) 395.

¹⁰ See Elton (1996b) 30–44. For some attempts to deduce tribal boundaries from material culture see Webster (1993) 41–75; Todd (1999) 29–42.

the army commander himself. Patrols did not simply inspect the ground: they also questioned the local population and sometimes employed local guides. Nearly all of this information was described in words rather than represented in diagrammatic form.¹¹

How little or how much geographical information was available to Roman commanders before a campaign varied considerably according to the situation. A province within the empire would inevitably be better known than territory not administered by Rome. Even so, there is some evidence to suggest that full records were kept only of official Roman roads, while other routes, however well established, were recorded only vaguely. Garrisons in the area were presumably able to supply information about such paths.¹² Much of the available information seems to have dealt with routes connecting major settlements along which an army might march. This was marked in the army's actual behaviour on campaign, for there was a great tendency to follow the same routes as earlier Roman forces operating in the area. Britain and Germany in particular offer many examples of successive marching camps constructed on the same site, so that Roman armies, sometimes decades apart, chose not only to march along the same route, but even to stop at the same intervals and camp on virtually the same spot. The factors which made a site an attractive location for a temporary camp in an earlier campaign may still have been apparent to later forces, but this tendency does reinforce the picture of an army primarily concerned with routes to an objective.¹³

3. *Types of war*

The Romans always fought for victory, but the causes of individual wars did much to shape their course. Each war had an alleged motive and objective, even if this was not always universally accepted. The question of to what extent Roman society, especially under the Republic, needed to fight a constant succession of wars to provide the aristocracy with glory and wealth or the economy with a supply of servile manpower, is discussed in vol. 1 (pp. 483–97) and pp. 199–205 below. Here we are concerned more with how the Roman army waged war.

It is convenient to divide the foreign wars fought by the army in this period into four broad groups:

- 1 Wars of conquest: these involved an attack on an independent people, kingdom or state. In some cases a Roman victory did result in the creation of a new permanent province to administer the conquered territory, but

¹¹ See Betrand (1997) 107–22. See also Nicolet (1991), which did much to encourage the debate over maps in the ancient world.

¹² Isaac (1996). ¹³ E.g. Hanson (1987) *passim*, esp. 121–7.

it was equally possible for the defeated enemy to be reduced to client or allied status. As far as the Romans were concerned, both methods incorporated the defeated enemy into the empire.

- 2 Wars to suppress rebellion: these involved the defeat of a people, kingdom, state or the followers of a leader/leaders within the empire. A Roman victory meant the re-establishment of control over the region and its population.
- 3 Punitive expeditions: these were attacks on a people, kingdom or state that were not intended to result in their permanent incorporation into the empire. Our sources frequently explain such Roman attacks as provoked by enemy raiding, but sometimes they were also intended to avenge earlier defeats. There does not seem to have been any set time period within which the Romans felt that their retribution must occur. We do not know to what extent Roman claims of provocation were justified in each instance. The objective in these expeditions was to generate fear in the enemy by a display of Rome's overwhelming might. The acquisition of loot was not supposed to have been a primary motive for such expeditions, although this rule seems sometimes to have been broken.¹⁴
- 4 Wars fought in response to invasion or raiding: these were operations intended to confront and defeat armies, bands or entire peoples entering Roman or allied territory without permission.

Reality is rarely neat and these categories are not intended to be rigid, merely aids to discussion. A war fought to suppress a successful rebellion within a province might well have become virtually a war of reconquest. This was true of the campaigns in Judaea after the failure of Cestius Gallus' drive on Jerusalem in AD 66. Similarly, one type of operation might well lead to another of a different type and objective. The initial phase of a conquest was frequently followed by periods of rebellion, while raiding or incursions into the provinces might well provoke the invasion and conquest of, or a punitive attack against, the enemy held responsible. Campaigns with some or all of these objectives might form part of the same overall conflict. During his Gallic campaigns Caesar's army mounted operations of all four types. The attacks on the Belgic tribes and on individual peoples like the Veneti and, probably, the second British expedition were wars of conquest. Major rebellions were faced and defeated in 54–53, 53–52 and 51 BC. The forays across the Rhine and the first British expedition were all justified as punitive expeditions. Finally the destruction of the Helvetii was in response to their incursion into Transalpine Gaul, as were some of the smaller operations mounted as reprisals for raids on allied tribes, especially during the major

¹⁴ Unnecessary campaigns waged for profit, e.g. App. *Hisp.* 9.51; *SHA Avid. Cass.* 4.3.



Figure 3.1 Coin of Caesar depicting a defeated Gaul (possibly the rebel leader Vercingetorix) surmounted by the triumphal display of captured Gallic armour.

rebellions. Whatever Caesar's personal motives for his aggressive campaigns in Gaul, these did not alter to any great degree the actual conduct of the operations once he had decided to embark upon them.

4. *Targets and objectives*

Wars of conquest

The aim of an army of conquest was to achieve and maintain control over the invaded people. The best means of achieving this varied according to their social and political organization. If they possessed a field army then its defeat in a pitched battle, or occasionally a series of battles, could well precipitate surrender. Such defeats demonstrated clearly that the Romans were stronger. All of the Belgic tribes present at the Sambre in 57 BC capitulated in the aftermath of the battle. In other phases of the Gallic campaigns the defeat of the tribal army in Gaul, Britain or Germany (see the coin in fig. 3.1) frequently prompted the tribe to seek terms (e.g. Caes. *B Gall.* 2.28, 3.27). In the case of the Veneti their navy rather than their army was the chief source of the tribe's martial pride, and it was only when this was brought to battle and destroyed that the campaign was concluded (Caes. *B Gall.* 3.9, 3.12, 3.14–16). Winning a pitched battle offered the opportunity of a swift and decisive victory.

As we have seen, Roman armies enjoyed many advantages over their opponents, especially in this type of fighting. Yet this did not mean that a Roman general would seek battle under all circumstances. Earlier in the

57 BC campaign Caesar had refused to fight a battle against the massed army of the Belgic tribes, despite the two sides remaining in close proximity for some time. Neither army had proved willing to leave its own strong position to attack at a disadvantage (Caes. *B Gall.* 2.7–8). Battles always involved an element of risk, and the mark of the good commander was to fight them only in the most favourable circumstances and when they offered tangible gain.¹⁵ At the beginning of our period in 134 BC Scipio Aemilianus refused to meet the Numantines in battle, even though he enjoyed a massive numerical superiority (App. *Hisp.* 87, 90–2). The caution of one of Rome's ablest generals to risk a battle may be explained by the recent series of humiliating defeats inflicted by the Celtiberians. The morale of the Roman soldiers was low, and battle in this period depended more than anything else on morale.

Avoiding battle, Scipio instead blockaded Numantia and starved the defenders into submission. The final surrender of Numantia brought the war to an end. Both before and after the Sambre Caesar defeated several Belgic tribes by attacking their most important town or *oppidum* (Caes. *B Gall.* 2.12–13, 2.29–33). The capture of a people's most important settlement, especially if it possessed strong political or religious significance, often prompted capitulation. Trajan seems to have made the Dacian capital of Sarmizegethusa the target in both the First and Second Dacian Wars, and the siege of the city figures prominently on Trajan's column. In 102 the direct threat to the capital prompted Decebalus to seek peace. In 106 its capture, following on from a series of defeats and the loss of many strongholds, prompted the king's suicide.¹⁶ An enemy who refused to risk its field army in a battle might be forced to do so by threats against its strongholds. Both Metellus and Marius targeted the walled cities of Jugurtha's Numidia, gradually reducing these strongholds. This prompted the Numidian king to risk a massed encounter.¹⁷

The professional Roman army possessed great skill in siege warfare and was frequently willing to accept the heavy casualties likely in direct assault. Even so, success was never certain and the siege of any sizeable fortified position took considerable time. Keeping a strong force concentrated in one place inevitably caused supply problems which were greatly exacerbated when the climate, season or local conditions reduced the amount of food, water, fodder and timber which could be gathered locally. The long supply lines supporting a besieging army offered tempting targets to a mobile enemy army. Mark Antony's Parthian expedition failed after attacks on his

¹⁵ E.g. Caes. *B Gall.* 7.52–3, and see discussion in Goldsworthy (1998) 204–6.

¹⁶ Dio Cass. 68.9.4–7, 14.3; Xiphilinus 8.3; Lepper and Frere (1988) 304–7.

¹⁷ Sall. *Iug.* 56. The situation was often similar in the campaigns against Parthia, e.g. Dio Cass. 40.13.1, 40.16.3, 40.20.3; Tac. *Ann.* 13.37–41.

supply lines, particularly one which wiped out a convoy with most of his siege engines.¹⁸

A politically united people could usually be forced to seek terms by either the defeat of their main military force, whether army or navy, or the loss of their most important centres. Peoples with a looser social and political organization rarely presented such clear targets. Where the enemy was divided into many semi-independent towns or villages, or small sub-divisions of larger tribes, then each of these communities needed to be defeated separately. Such conflicts were waged on a smaller scale, the Roman army dividing into smaller detachments to capture each village or beat its warriors in battle and so subjugate each distinct community. The reconquest of Judaea following the initial success of the rebellions against Nero and Hadrian in each case required the capture of very large numbers of fortified towns and walled villages (Dio Cass. 69.12.3–13.3). Such fighting could be arduous, but as long as the Roman army possessed the resources and the determination to complete the task then its eventual success was certain.

In 56 BC Caesar's first attack on the Menapii and Morini failed to achieve much when the tribesmen refused to be drawn into open fighting and hid in forests and marshes, emerging only to ambush the Romans. Caesar ravaged their fields, burned down a few villages and farms, but then withdrew to winter quarters, even though the tribes had not surrendered (Caes. *B Gall.* 3.28). The next year, some but not all of the Morini sent envoys to sue for peace. Yet the tribesmen readily broke the peace to attack an isolated group of 300 Romans whose ships had been blown further along the coast than the rest of the fleet returning from Britain. Cavalry were sent to rescue this force and in the next days Caesar sent Labienus with two legions against the tribe. The Morini rapidly surrendered, Caesar claiming that the marshy areas were drier that year and offered little sanctuary. Another Roman column was sent against the Menapii and once again devastated their territory but failed to persuade the tribe to give in (Caes. *B Gall.* 4.36–8). A legion was stationed to watch the Morini in the winter of 54–53 and at some point Caesar made the tribe tributary to his ally Commius the Atrebatian (Caes. *B Gall.* 5.24, 7.76). When Caesar again attacked the Menapii in 53 BC, the Gauls retired with their families and possessions into the least accessible forest and marsh areas. This time the Romans built causeways across the marshes and, dividing into three fast-moving columns, devastated farms and villages, capturing cattle and many people. This finally prompted the tribe to seek peace (Caes. *B Gall.* 6.5–6).

The loose social structure of some tribal peoples, who frequently had many petty chieftains but no clear central authority, and in particular the

¹⁸ Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 38; cf. Dio Cass. 68.31.1–32.1.

independence of many warriors, often seem to have puzzled the Romans (see pp. 16, 23 above). In Spain in 152 BC Claudius Marcellus accepted the surrender of the Nerobriges and demanded that they provide him with a hundred cavalrymen. Soon afterwards his column was attacked by some warriors from this tribe. When the agreed number of auxiliaries arrived, Marcellus had them put in chains, despite their pleas that the ambushing warriors had not known of the agreement. It is possible that the treachery had been deliberate, but far more likely that the tribesmen could not understand why the Romans should hold them responsible for the actions of their kindred who, like them, were free warriors (App. *Hisp.* 9.48).

Claudius' invasion of Britain saw fighting of all the types and scales mentioned above. At first the main target was the strong tribal confederation based around the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes, led by Caratacus and Togodumnus. The Britons possessed a sizeable army and were willing to face the Roman invaders in battle. The delay in the launching of the expedition had led to the dispersal of the British army, and so first Caratacus and then his brother at the head of smaller forces were defeated independently. Once the tribal levy had mustered again the British leaders once more chose to risk battle, defending a river (almost certainly the Medway) where they were defeated after a hard-fought two-day action. Soon afterwards the Romans forced the passage of the Thames and in subsequent fighting killed Togodumnus. For political reasons the Roman army paused, its commander, Aulus Plautius, summoning the aid of the emperor. After Claudius' arrival the Romans once again defeated the Britons in battle and went on to capture the main *oppidum* of Camulodunum. Although there had been some minor defections from the dependants of the Catuvellauni after the initial defeats, most notably of a section of the Dobunni, it was this which marked the collapse of their confederation, as many leaders formally surrendered to the emperor (Dio Cass. 60.19–22.2).

With the strongest and most united British power defeated the invasion army divided into smaller detachments to continue the campaign. At least one of the legionary commanders, the future emperor Vespasian, seems to have enjoyed considerable freedom in his operations in the south-west. Suetonius (*Vesp.* 4) claims that he overcame two tribes – one of which was certainly the Durotriges – fighting thirty battles and taking twenty *oppida* and also the Isle of Wight. The Durotriges appear to have lacked a strong central authority, with power probably focusing on the chieftains of the numerous multi-banked hill-forts dotting their territory. The large number of battles and sieges carried out by a force of no more than a single legion (*II Augusta*) and its auxiliaries, probably not much more than 10,000 men, strongly suggests that many of these were small-scale affairs. These campaigns demonstrated the Roman army's ability to adapt to the local

situation, operating in a way and on a scale most likely to overcome the enemy.¹⁹

Wars to suppress rebellion

At the beginning of a rebellion, the initiative inevitably lay with the rebels. It was the first priority of Roman officers attempting to suppress an insurrection to regain the initiative and attempt to dictate the course of the campaign. When in AD 48 and 60 the Icenii rebelled the Romans responded on both occasions by immediately counterattacking with whatever forces were available at short notice (Tac. *Ann.* 12.32, 14.31–9). Caesar's response to the revolt of the Eburones and Nervii in the winter of 54–53 BC was similarly prompt. With only two weak legions (Caesar had tried to summon a third but had backed its commander's decision to remain where he was lest the rebellion spread to that region) and some cavalry, the Roman general marched to relieve the besieged garrison of Quintus Cicero. The little column had few supplies, could expect to draw few resources from the winter landscape and was not prepared for a long-drawn-out campaign. However, the Roman commander managed to lure the Nervii into attacking his force and defeated them in battle, relieving Cicero's camp.²⁰ Other rebellions during the Gallic campaigns prompted a similarly quick and bold response from the Romans. In 52 and 51 BC Caesar launched immediate counterattacks against rebellious tribes, often taking the field with small and inadequately supplied forces.²¹

At the beginning of a revolt any success for the rebels encouraged others to join them. The Nervii only rebelled in 54 BC after the Eburones had attacked and defeated Sabinus and Cotta. Even inaction on the part of the Romans could be interpreted as weakness and help the rebellion to spread. A swift and bold response by the nearest Roman forces created an impression of strength and confidence which was sometimes enough to overawe the opposition. In Judaea in 4 BC the Syrian governor Publius Quinctilius Varus managed to suppress the disturbances which followed the death of Herod the Great by a rapid display of force. A similarly aggressive response by the same man to rumours of insurrection in Germany in AD 9 resulted in disaster. Similarly in AD 66 the arrival of a hastily mustered field army from Syria failed to quell the rising at Jerusalem and produced another, if less spectacular, Roman disaster.²²

¹⁹ Maxfield (1986) 70–1, (1989a) 24–5.

²⁰ Caes. *B Gall.* 5.24–52. For a more detailed discussion of this campaign see Goldsworthy (1996) 79–84.

²¹ Caes. *B Gall.* 7 *passim*, esp. 6.13, 8.3–13. ²² Joseph. *Bf* 2.39–79; Dio Cass. 56.18–22.

Commanders faced with the outbreak of rebellion had to balance the need for immediate action with the risks of exposing small and poorly prepared forces to defeats which would inevitably encourage the enemy. Good commanders attempted to gather as large and as high quality a force as possible. Both Caesar in 54 BC and Suetonius Paulinus in AD 60 sent messengers to summon additional legions. Yet when these did not arrive, and there was no prospect of further reinforcement in the immediate future, both commanders made do with the troops already under their command. These rebellions occurred while the conquest of a province was still under way and thus the Romans were maintaining strong forces in the field. When provinces had been occupied for a considerable time then there is no evidence to suggest that the garrisons in them remained permanently ready for war. Army units provided detachments for many duties, and sometimes were poorly trained and weak in numbers. It was also exceedingly difficult at short notice to gather the provisions and transport necessary to support an army in a long campaign.

Several of the disasters already mentioned occurred because the Roman columns were not properly prepared for fighting an actual campaign. If such a force met real opposition then its defeat was likely. Yet waiting to amass a more powerful army was only worthwhile if reinforcements and resources could realistically be expected. If no such prospect existed then most Roman commanders normally chose to attack with whatever forces were available. In AD 26, when rumours that Thracian auxiliaries were no longer to serve in ethnic units and might be sent abroad prompted some of the tribes to rebel, Poppaeus Sabinus delayed the enemy by pretending to be willing to negotiate. Once the expected reinforcements of a legion and auxiliaries arrived from Moesia, he advanced boldly. Fortified positions were stormed and any concentration of rebels confronted. When the main Thracian force refused to join battle Sabinus began to besiege their hill-fort. Only a few of the tribesmen were able to escape from the Roman blockade, and the rebellion ended when the remainder surrendered.²³ In this case Sabinus postponed action until he had adequate resources at his disposal, since he knew that these were on their way.

In AD 26 the Thracians proved reluctant to fight a pitched battle and were defeated when their main stronghold was captured by siege. During the Bar Kochba revolt Julius Severus was reluctant to face the rebels in open battle. Instead he fought a war of raid and ambush, winning many small-scale fights, and concentrated on capturing enemy strongholds.²⁴ Although the Roman army usually enjoyed significant advantages in the

²³ Tac. *Ann.* 4.46–51.

²⁴ Dio Cass. 69.13.1–14.3, cf. the revolt of the Bucoli in AD 172, Dio Cass. 72.4.2.

highest levels and most intensive forms of fighting, this did not mean that Roman armies always attempted to fight in this way. The Romans adapted to fight different enemies in different ways and, as with wars of conquest, might choose to attack an enemy's main strongholds or its field army or instead ravage its farms and villages, destroying crops and rounding up livestock. The ablest Roman commanders took care to exploit all possible advantages over the enemy and did not wage war in a rigid way.

Punitive expeditions

The object of a punitive expedition was to inflict sufficient harm on an enemy to deter it from future hostile actions against Rome. They allowed the Romans to dominate a region without physically occupying or annexing it. Frequently such campaigns were declared to be responses to raiding against Rome's allies, but just as often they were intended to exact vengeance for blows to Roman pride.²⁵ Operations of this type were most commonly fought against tribal opponents. In 51 BC Cicero led such an expedition of two weak legions plus allies against the peoples of Mt Amanus, his army dividing into three columns to launch surprise attacks on a number of villages. One of the more important strongholds was besieged, surrendering after fifty-seven days. The threat of siege prompted the surrender of another nearby fortified village (Cic. *Fam.* 15.4). This expedition demonstrated to the local population that the Romans could and would attack their mountain strongholds if provoked. Spending almost two months besieging an obscure village emphasized their determination and technical superiority, as the effort and time devoted to the defeat of the small number of rebels on Masada would later emphasize the commitment of the army to stamping out all traces of resistance in Judaea.²⁶ It created an impression of overwhelming strength, although this could easily be dispelled by subsequent Roman defeats. Shortly after Cicero's Cilician campaign, the governor of Syria, Bibulus, launched a punitive expedition of his own into the same mountainous region. He suffered a costly defeat, denting the illusion of Roman might (Cic. *Att.* 5.20).

Caesar launched many punitive expeditions during the Gallic campaigns. As in Cicero's case he emphasized surprise, attacking unexpectedly or outside the normal campaigning season, and moving with little baggage to slow the column. Usually the army's baggage was deposited in a defended position, while the remainder of the army marched out unencumbered for brief forays into the surrounding area. On one occasion his troops abandoned the usual practice of setting fire to each settlement they passed, knowing

²⁵ A theme discussed in Mattern (1999) *passim*. ²⁶ Luttwak (1976) 117.

that the plumes of smoke would warn the enemy of their presence (Caes. *B Gall.* 8.3). Caesar repeatedly emphasized the importance of raiding among most Gallic and Germanic peoples. During these operations the Romans were effectively employing similar tactics to the tribes themselves, though often more efficiently and on a larger scale. Germanicus and Caecina led columns of four legions and auxiliaries in their forays across the Rhine in AD 14–15.²⁷ It took time for a tribal army to muster, and in many cases the Romans encountered no sizeable opposition. If a battle did take place it was usually as the Roman column was withdrawing.²⁸

In most cases the Roman aim was not to provoke the enemy into battle. Caesar considered that having bridged the Rhine and advanced confidently to the east was sufficient achievement in both 55 and 53 BC (Caes. *B Gall.* 4.19, 6.29). When the Suebi withdrew deeper into their territory and began to form an army, Caesar decided against engaging them in battle. It was enough to show that the Romans could reach a tribe, devastating its land with impunity. Devastation was often the principal aim of these operations.²⁹ Buildings and crops were burned and the enemy's herds rounded up. The impact of such a raid was doubtless terrible on the communities in the direct path of the army, although those even a comparatively short distance away from the Romans' line of march and the reach of their marauding parties would not have been directly affected. Unless repeated year after year it is unlikely that such activities would cause serious economic problems for the targeted tribe or state. Earth and timber houses could be readily replaced, animals and food stores hidden out of reach of the Romans. Yet the failure to prevent such attacks emphasized a tribe's vulnerability and was a serious blow to its pride. Fear of further assaults often forced a people to submit, though the resentment the attacks caused may have fostered future wars.

On other occasions the Romans did seek a direct confrontation with the enemy army. In AD 28 the Frisii attacked Roman troops collecting tribute, massacring some of the party and surrounding the remainder in the fort at Flevum. Lucius Apronius, the legate of Germania Inferior, reacted with the usual Roman promptness in the face of rebellion. He rapidly gathered strong detachments of legionaries and auxiliaries, transported them down the Rhine and attacked the tribe. Although Tacitus notes that the general began to construct causeways and roads to allow his columns and supplies easier passage through the marshy and difficult terrain, Apronius chose to launch an attack before these were complete. Clearly there was a desire to strike at the enemy army as soon as possible. The Roman attack was poorly coordinated and their troops were defeated piecemeal. Heavy

²⁷ E.g. Tac. *Ann.* 1.50–1, 1.55–7, 1.60.

²⁸ E.g. Tac. *Ann.* 1.51, 1.56 where it is noted as exceptional that the Chatti did not attack the rearguard.

²⁹ For a discussion of pillaging, see Roth (1999) 148–54.

casualties were suffered and the main body was extricated only with difficulty (Tac. *Ann.* 4.72–3).

Wars fought in response to invasion or raiding

Operations of this sort represented the opposite of the last category. If the Romans were perceived to be unable to protect their allies and provinces from raiding, then this weakened their reputation for strength and invited further attacks. In the mid-second century BC a series of charismatic Lusitanian leaders led large-scale raids in the Roman province. At one stage Viriathus forced many communities allied to Rome to pay tribute. Successive Roman governors made every effort to intercept the raiders or, failing that, to launch a punitive expedition in response. Each raid which gathered booty and escaped attack or defeated the Roman column sent against it encouraged more, larger-scale attacks.³⁰

In AD 50 some parties of the Chatti raided Germania Superior. The governor, Publius Pomponius Secundus, sent auxiliary infantry and cavalry to catch the raiders while he gathered his main army. The auxiliaries were ordered to head off the barbarians as they escaped or, if the enemy split into smaller groups, to catch and surround each party. The Romans divided into two columns, one of which found a party of returning barbarians laden down with booty. The enemy, many of whom were drunk, were easily killed or captured. The other Roman column encountered a force willing to fight a battle and defeated them. Re-forming with the main force, Pomponius hoped that these defeats would sting the Chatti into seeking revenge and confronting him in battle. Instead the Germans sent envoys to make peace, unwilling to wage a serious conflict against the Romans and lay themselves open to attack by their traditional enemies, the Cherusci (Tac. *Ann.* 12.27–8). It was very difficult to intercept raiders on their way into a province. They moved quickly and had the advantage of surprise. It also took time for warning of their presence to spread and for the Romans to react. Once the marauders had reached their target and acquired plunder their progress became slower. It was far more likely that raiders would be caught as they withdrew rather than as they advanced. Laden with plunder, such forces were often highly vulnerable and on more than a few occasions were surprised by Roman troops and easily vanquished.³¹

The main problem posed between AD 17 and 24 by Tacfarinas' rebellion was one of raiding into a settled province. Although Camillus defeated the Numidian in a pitched battle this did not break the former auxiliary's power. In the aftermath Tacfarinas led small-scale raids, moving quickly to avoid interception, and when these succeeded he gradually increased the scale of his attacks. The rout of a Roman cohort further boosted Tacfarinas'

³⁰ See Dyson (1985) 187–97, 199–216. ³¹ E.g. Tac. *Hist.* 1.79; cf. Elton (1996b) 214–17.

reputation and confidence, even encouraging him to risk another direct attack on a Roman garrison. The failure of this attempt deterred future direct attacks on Roman bases, but did not prevent an escalation of the raiding against undefended settlements, the fast-moving marauders easily evading pursuit. One successful foray into the coastal regions of the Roman province produced so much booty that the need to carry and protect it restricted the raiders' movements, allowing a Roman column to catch and defeat them. Yet raiding continued unabated and the next governor, Blaesus, divided his forces into three mobile columns to pursue the small groups of swift-moving raiders. Care was taken to defend as many of the settlements as possible by the presence of troops or by fortification. This achieved some success, but the small scale at which the enemy operated necessitated the Romans dividing into even smaller forces and continuing the war into the winter months.

The victory was not complete and it was not long before the problem recurred, Tacfarinas spreading the rumour that the Romans planned to evacuate Africa because of widespread problems throughout the empire. In response the Romans used four field columns, each with contingents of Moors acting as guides and auxiliaries, matching the enemy's own field-craft and familiarity with local conditions. Tacfarinas' camp was located and a surprise attack launched by Roman troops who had made a forced march to reach it. Tacfarinas was killed and, as was often the case with the death of such charismatic leaders, the will of the enemy to resist then collapsed.³²

These campaigns emphasize the flexibility and willingness to adapt of the Roman army, with a range of solutions to the military problem being attempted. However, they also illustrate the difficulty of defending a large number of settlements spread over a wide area. This point is important for our consideration of how Rome's frontier areas functioned militarily. Blaesus was only able to provide protection for so many communities because the forces at his disposal had been virtually doubled with the arrival of *legio IX*.

There seems to have been a common perception among many tribal peoples that a Roman province was especially vulnerable during the period of transition between two governors. Newly arrived legates such as Corbulo in Lower Germany and Scapula and Agricola in Britain found their provinces disturbed, but surprised the enemy with the rapidity with which they took the field.³³ In AD 57 a rumour that Nero had forbidden his *legati* to lead their armies against the enemy prompted the Frisians to occupy an area of fertile land along the Rhine, only to be forcibly ejected by the Romans (Tac. *Ann.* 13.54). Soon afterwards the Ampsivarii, dispossessed from their

³² Tac. *Ann.* 2.52, 3.20–1, 3.73–4, 4.23–5.

³³ Tac. *Ann.* 11.18–19, 12.31, *Agr.* 18.

own lands as a result of war with the Chauci, arrived to occupy the same stretch of land. Acting in concert with the governor of the other German province, who mounted a show of force against the Ampsivarii's potential allies, the commander on the spot once again ejected the settlers.

There appears to have been little or no actual fighting in this campaign, displays of Rome's military might being sufficient to cause the allies to back down and the Ampsivarii themselves to abandon the disputed land (Tac. *Ann.* 13.15–16). Demonstrations of power and implicit or direct threats of the use of actual force were common in Rome's relations with other peoples. Few if any of the achievements recounted in the famous inscription recording the Moesian governorship of Tiberius Plautius Silvanus (*ILS* 986) actually involved his forces in real fighting. Parades of Roman power and threats of actual force were commonplace in Roman diplomacy, against the Parthians as much as a small barbarian tribe.³⁴

5. *War in the mind*

The way in which a Roman army prosecuted a campaign varied according to local circumstances, but also with the nature of the enemy. Some opponents were defeated in one large-scale battle, others in a series of engagements. Alternatively, the capture by the Romans of an important centre, such as a city or town, ended some conflicts, while in others the destruction of farms and crops and the seizure of cattle persuaded an enemy to submit. Sometimes the means by which the Romans sought victory altered during a conflict, either because initial plans had failed or because the situation had changed. The army was flexible enough to adapt, although just like any other military force in any period of history, the process was not always an easy or steady evolution and could contain any number of false starts.

There does not appear to have been a single preferred way in which to prosecute a war. The Roman army enjoyed many advantages in pitched battles, where its superior organization, command structure, drill, discipline and tactical flexibility outclassed all foreign opponents. Sometimes Roman commanders deliberately ravaged an enemy's fields or sacked his towns in an effort to force a reluctant enemy to risk an open battle and be destroyed. Yet on other occasions generals refused to meet an enemy who offered battle and chose to wage war in a different way. Similarly, although the professional army was skilled in siegecraft and won many wars by capturing the enemy's strongholds, it did not always choose to make such centres the main object of its attack. Roman armies sometimes avoided such high-intensity warfare

³⁴ E.g. Tac. *Ann.* 6.36, where the threat of a Roman invasion prompts the Parthians to withdraw from Armenia; see also Luttwak (1976) 32–3, although his claim that threats of force were more effective against more civilized states is highly questionable.

as battles and sieges and chose instead to fight by surprise attack and raid. Discipline and a clear line of command and sense of purpose made Roman raids fast moving and in many ways more effective than those launched by peoples who were culturally disposed to fight in this way. In addition the Roman logistical support system made it possible to attack with sizeable forces outside the normal campaigning season, a factor which frequently increased the surprise achieved over the enemy.

Wars ended when one side was willing to concede defeat and seek peace. Rarely did either side have the capacity to destroy completely an enemy's ability to continue the struggle. Heavy losses might be inflicted on an army in battle, or on the population in general and its economic resources by widespread raiding, massacre and enslavement, but such losses were rarely if ever serious enough to justify some modern claims that the Romans waged wars of extermination. Domitian's infamous comment that he had 'forbidden the Nasmones to exist' referred to a heavy defeat inflicted on their army which resulted in many casualties among their camp-followers, and not the annihilation of an entire people.³⁵ The destruction of an entire tribe or people was not a realistic option, but a troublesome enemy could be transplanted and resettled elsewhere. This was done to some Ligurians in the early second century BC and by Pompey to the pirates during his spectacularly quick victory in 67 BC.³⁶ Ostorius Scapula is supposed to have threatened the Silures with similar punishment (*Tac. Ann.* 12.39). The death of a king or other strong leader might result in the fragmentation of his confederation, and certainly often concluded a war.³⁷ Caesar's mass execution of tribal elders can only have had a drastic impact on the life of a community, and the archaeological record can be interpreted as showing major social dislocation in some regions as a result of the Roman invasion.³⁸ Yet most peoples defeated by the Romans continued to exist after the war, many of them, of course, becoming allies.

Usually a war ended with one side conceding defeat. With very few exceptions in this period it was Rome's enemies who admitted that they had lost. The Romans fought wars with great determination, relentlessly pursuing victory, a trait which they had displayed since at least the third century BC. Generals were not expected to negotiate a peace treaty which did not make clear Rome's total victory, although under the Republic the desire to gain the glory of having ended a war sometimes encouraged commanders to offer the enemy more favourable terms.³⁹ Tacitus criticized Tiberius for

³⁵ Dio Cass. 67.4.6; Luttwak (1976) 46.

³⁶ Dyson (1985) 55, 90, 100–1, 104–6, 113, 205–6, 213–14, 226; Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 28.

³⁷ Goldsworthy (1996) 94.

³⁸ E.g. Caes. *B Gall.* 2.28, 3.17. For the archaeological evidence for the impact of Caesar's campaigns on Gallia Belgica, see Roymans (1983) 43–69, (1990).

³⁹ E.g. App. *Hisp.* 9.49; Caes. *B Gall.* 5.22–3; cf. Polyb. 18.11.1–2.

failing to renew the war against the Frisians after the reverse suffered by Lucius Apronius, and was equally scathing of Domitian's partial victories in Germany and Dacia. The terms of his treaty with Decebalus, by which the Romans paid a subsidy to the king and lent him technical aid, made it evident that Dacia remained an independent power and not a clearly subordinate ally, which would have been the proper outcome for a Roman war.⁴⁰ Such unsatisfactory treaties made a renewal of the conflict almost inevitable. This was even more true of Roman defeats, and Tacitus (*Germ.* 37) implied that the subjugation of the German tribes was an on-going struggle. Similarly, the memory of defeats inflicted by the Parthians ensured that war was resumed every few decades in the east, the majority of the conflicts seemingly initiated by Rome.⁴¹ When Nero and his *consilium* debated what should be done after the disaster in Armenia in AD 62, they were faced with the 'the choice between a hazardous war and an ignominious peace [*bellum anceps an pax inhonesta*]. There was no hesitation about the verdict for war.' This was one of the few decisions made by Nero of which Tacitus clearly approved (*Ann.* 15.25).

The Romans' refusal to concede defeat, combined with the quality of their army and the extent of their resources, made it very difficult for their opponents to win a permanent victory. A rebellious people could rarely hope that their continued resistance would persuade the Romans to withdraw. In the initial period of conquest, there was a chance that a single great victory might expel the occupying army, as happened in Germany in AD 9 and might have happened in Gaul in 52 BC or Britain in AD 60. However, the consequences of resisting Rome were usually appalling. The proper outcome of a Roman battlefield victory was a concerted pursuit led by the cavalry in which the aim was to inflict as heavy losses on the enemy as possible. The sack of a city or the devastation of villages and farms were deliberately made as brutal as possible. The Romans had a pragmatic attitude to savagery and atrocity, believing almost any action justifiable so long as it achieved a useful purpose.⁴² Severed heads might be fired into a besieged city or captives crucified *en masse* in view of its walls to frighten the enemy into submission.⁴³

It was not just the ferocity of Roman warfare which intimidated opponents. In all of the types of campaign discussed in this chapter the behaviour of Roman armies was always remarkably aggressive. From the beginning generals sought to seize the initiative and then maintain it, constantly renewing the assault. Even when reluctant to fight a pitched battle the Romans still attacked the enemy in another way, targeting his strongholds or launching raids against his fields. There were no cases of a Roman army

⁴⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 4.74, *Agr.* 41; Dio Cass. 67.6.1–7.4. ⁴¹ Isaac (1992) 28–33.

⁴² See Gilliver (1996b). ⁴³ E.g. Frontin. *Str.* 2.9.4; Joseph. *BJ* 5.446–51, 7.202–6.

maintaining a passive defence for any length of time. Instead the instinct of Roman officers appears to have been to confront the enemy as soon as possible, so that outnumbered and poorly prepared Roman forces often still launched bold attacks. The confidence shown by the Roman army implied that its victories were inevitable and effortless. Since wars were decided once one side lost the will, rather than the ability, to fight on, such displays of supreme confidence were very intimidating. The bold actions and assurance of Roman armies were vitally important in an era when the appearance of strength played so great a role in warfare. Roman commanders were consistently bold, sometimes to the point of recklessness, and it is worth remembering that Fabius Maximus was unique among Roman commanders in being celebrated for his caution and reluctance to fight.⁴⁴

6. *Practicalities*

Intelligence

The amount and quality of intelligence available to Roman armies on campaign varied considerably.⁴⁵ The armies in this period were comparatively small in numbers but operated over large areas, and it was sometimes difficult for each side to locate the enemy field army. Yet in comparison to the middle Republic Roman armies in this period took great care to reconnoitre their line of march and seek information about the enemy's strength, location and intentions. Sometimes armies were surprised to encounter the enemy, as was the case when German raiders ambushed the cavalry and then the main army of Lollius Urbicus in 15 BC, or most famously in the disaster of AD 9 (Dio Cass. 54.20, 56.18–22). However, such incidents were rare, and in the last case explained by the defection of Varus' German scouts.

The amount of information available to a commander depended to a great extent on where the campaign occurred. Areas outside the provinces or where Roman armies had not campaigned in the past were often poorly known. Caesar sent an officer to reconnoitre the coast of Britain before his expedition in 55 BC, but failed to gain very much information.⁴⁶ In 53 BC Crassus led his army through open plains instead of hilly country less suited to the Parthian horsemen as a result of faulty information (Plut. *Vit. Crass.* 20–1). Far more information was normally available concerning regions where there had long been Roman presence or action. Caesar was able to get some information about the Gallic tribes from Roman traders who had long been active in their *oppida* (e.g. Caes. *B Gall.* 1.39, 4.20). Later, in frontier areas where the army had long been present, there were instances of

⁴⁴ Goldsworthy (1998) 200–1.

⁴⁵ Only fairly recently has a systematic study of Roman intelligence gathering been produced in Austin and Rankov (1995).

⁴⁶ Caes. *B Gall.* 4.21, and see comments in Austin and Rankov (1995) 13, 100–1.

centurions or other officers attending meetings of tribal chieftains (e.g. Dio Cass. 73.2.4). Perhaps this was one of the duties of the regional centurions mentioned in Britain.⁴⁷

Roman allies among the peoples outside the provinces were further sources of information. It should never be forgotten that alongside Roman warfare went very active diplomacy, with representatives, often army officers, going to foreign leaders, and many friendly chieftains receiving subsidy or other aid (see pp. 11–14 above). Power among the tribal peoples tended to be unstable since much depended on the prestige of individual leaders, and the degree of unity within and outside a people fluctuated over time. The details of such changes can only have been complex, but the Romans clearly had at least some knowledge on which to base their reaction. Caesar, among others, had persuaded the Senate to recognize Ariovistus as a ‘Friend of the Roman People’ during his consulship and long before the German leader had come anywhere near the Roman province. In the *Commentarii* Ariovistus is even supposed to have received messages from Caesar’s political enemies in Rome (Caes. *B Gall.* 1.36, 1.40, 1.44).

Caesar was informed of the approach of the migrating Helvetii while in Rome (Caes. *B Gall.* 1.7), presumably either by an allied tribe or from information gathered by the garrison of Transalpine Gaul. The amount of long-distance intelligence varied considerably, but major movements or migrations were usually detected, although sometimes not until a people had reached Roman territory, as was the case with the Frisians and Ampsivarii. Messages could pass more quickly and reliably through settled regions. Cicero’s dispatch informing Caesar that his camp was under attack could only be carried by the servant of a loyal Nervian chieftain through the enemy lines (Caes. *B Gall.* 5.45–6). The reply to this message was attached to a javelin and hurled by a Gallic auxiliary into the beleaguered camp, but went unnoticed for several days (Caes. *B Gall.* 5.48). Caesar was able to communicate far more easily with the legions under Fabius and Labienus in coordinating the relief expedition.

Many of the details of Roman intelligence gathering elude us. We do not know precisely who on a governor’s staff was responsible for receiving, processing and recording intelligence reports. Our sources emphasize that careful gathering of intelligence was one of the many attributes of a good commander. Roman armies are unlikely to have been much worse (and were probably often better) at gathering intelligence than most armies until the nineteenth century, when improvements in communications and the rise of professional staffs placed more and more information in the hands of army commanders.

⁴⁷ E.g. *RIB* 1.152, *T.Vindol.* II 250; cf. the district centurions in Egypt, see Alston (1995) 86–96.



Figure 3.2 Scene from Trajan's column depicting legionaries constructing a fort. The skill and commitment of Roman armies in such field engineering was a major foundation of their military success.

Field engineering

The engineering skill of the professional Roman army remains justly famous, although sometimes the apparent enthusiasm of the legions for building fortifications has led to unjustified accusations of a 'trench-warfare' mentality.⁴⁸ In 58 BC Caesar had his men construct a line of fortifications eighteen (Roman) miles long to block the route of the Helvetii (Caes. *B Gall.* 1.8). Actively defended by legionaries stationed in a series of forts, it proved impossible for the migrating tribe to break through. On other occasions fortifications were employed to protect bridges or river crossings, or occasionally to secure an army's flanks in battle.⁴⁹ In the Civil War, most notably at Dyrrachium in 48 BC, both armies constructed extensive lines of defences facing each other (Caes. *B Civ.* 3.44–74). Defensive lines, both those of circumvallation (which surrounded an enemy) and contravallation (which faced outwards) were especially common in situations of siege or blockade. The use of such lines of fortification does not seem to have made Roman war-making slow and methodical, still less as static as more recent trench warfare. If Roman armies were very ready to make use of fieldworks where these served a purpose they rarely showed any reluctance to abandon these positions as soon as that purpose had been served.

The construction of a temporary camp – the scale of its defences varying with the nature of the local threat – after each day's march helped to accustom soldiers to labouring on projects which were only expected to serve for a comparatively short period of time. These bases gave Roman armies security against sudden attacks, and a place to form before, and reorganize and rest after, battle. If the army remained in one place for any length of time then the walls of such forts could be made higher, the ditches deeper and towers added to create very strong positions (fig. 3.2). All types

⁴⁸ E.g. Fuller (1965) 74–87.

⁴⁹ E.g. Caes. *B Gall.* 2.5, 8, 6.29; Frontin. *Str.* 2.3.17.

of fortification employed by the Roman army were intended to function as part of an aggressive defensive system, mobile units advancing to fight in the open. It was not the role of such works to stop and defeat an enemy attack through their strength alone.

The grand lines of fortification sometimes constructed by the army served a practical purpose, but they were also visually very impressive, and as a result intimidating to an enemy, most of whom were incapable of constructing comparable works. This same combination of spectacle and utility was also a feature of the roads, causeways and bridges which the army constructed to facilitate its advance. In the provinces the programme of road construction was already well under way in this period. Temporary roads were also constructed by a campaigning army, and columns were regularly preceded by detachments tasked with improving existing tracks and clearing any obstacles.⁵⁰ Several of the campaigns described earlier in the chapter included a phase when the Romans cleared forests and established routes into marshland before mounting their attack.

Bridges were an especially impressive statement of the Romans' determination not to be prevented by nature from achieving their objectives. A road supported by moored boats was one of the commonest methods of river crossing, the Roman equivalent of a pontoon bridge, and such structures are frequently mentioned in our sources (e.g. Dio Cass. 71.3) as well as appearing on monuments such as Trajan's column. Caesar tells us that he felt crossing the Rhine by boat was both too risky and beneath the Romans' dignity, and he goes into great detail in describing the bridge which he built, supported on piles driven into the river bed. Neither of his expeditions across the Rhine involved any serious fighting, but he clearly felt that the details of his bridge would interest and impress his audience (Caes. *B Gall.* 4.17). The epitomator of Dio included rather more detail about Trajan's bridge across the Danube than any other episode in the Dacian Wars (fig. 3.3).⁵¹ Inscriptions testify to the symbolic importance of the triumph over nature represented by bridging a river.⁵² Caesar withdrew back to the west bank of the Rhine after a very short period in both 55 and 53 BC, in each case breaking down his bridge after the army had recrossed. This action did not weaken the achievement of either expedition. Caesar had demonstrated the Romans' determination to reach an enemy regardless of the difficulties involved. The bridge was destroyed to prevent its use by the barbarians, but there was nothing to prevent the Romans from repairing it or constructing another whenever they chose to do so.

⁵⁰ E.g. Joseph. *BJ* 3.115–26; Ps. Hyginus, *De munitionibus castrorum* 24.

⁵¹ Dio Cass. 68.13.1–6; Trajan's column scenes 259–61. ⁵² See Braund (1996) 43–7.



Figure 3.3 Scene from Trajan's column depicting the Roman army crossing the Danube into Dacia on a bridge of boats. Roman bridging abilities and the contribution of naval forces even to such inland campaigns were further elements in their military dominance.

Logistics

Roads, causeways and bridges made it easier for the marching columns of Roman soldiers to reach their objectives. They were even more important in allowing those columns to carry their baggage, supplies and equipment with them. The logistic system of the Roman army was one of the most important factors in its success. Much of the system had already developed by the beginning of our period, the pressure of the Punic Wars and subsequent conflicts throughout the Mediterranean having contributed greatly to this. It became commonplace for armies to draw supplies from distant provinces, huge amounts of material being transported, usually by sea, and accumulated in supply dumps in the campaigning zone. The basic system altered little under the Principate, although the administrative system to control it crystallized and became permanent.⁵³

The need to keep his soldiers and their mounts fed and equipped placed heavy restrictions on what a commander could actually expect his army to do. Caesar constantly mentions the need to keep his army properly supplied as influencing his decisions during the campaigns in Gaul and the Civil War.⁵⁴ However, it is vital to remember that feeding the army was not an end in itself, merely a way of allowing the army to perform its military function. When the military situation justified taking such a chance by offering the prospect of real gain, a commander could ignore the demands of logistics, at least in the short term, as Caesar did at Avaricum in 52 BC and in the invasion of Greece in 48 BC.⁵⁵ Depriving the enemy of supplies was a recognized strategy, Plutarch telling us that the Romans referred to

⁵³ For logistics in general, see Roth (1999) and Erdkamp (1998). Also of note are Labisch (1975) and Breeze (1986–7).

⁵⁴ E.g. Caes. *B Gall.* 1.23, 2.10, 2.38, 4.7, 5.31, 6.10, 7.10, 7.32, 8.3.

⁵⁵ This point is well emphasized by Erdkamp (1998) *passim*.

this as 'kicking the enemy in the belly'.⁵⁶ An enemy commander unable to feed his soldiers could be forced to disperse them, the small detachments then becoming vulnerable as they withdrew and perhaps laying important assets such as towns or farmland open to Roman attack. Alternatively the enemy might be forced to fight in an unfavourable position.⁵⁷

The Roman army's system of logistic support was markedly superior to that of all of its opponents in this period (see pp. 169–73 below). With sufficient preparation Roman forces could operate in extremely harsh conditions, as when Aelius Gallus marched through the desert in the Nabataean campaign, his troops carrying all the food and water which they needed (Strabo 16.4.24). At other times Roman armies were able to continue operating in the African winter in the struggle with Tacfarinas, or to launch punitive expeditions against Gallic, German or British tribes before or after the normal campaigning season. Tribal armies were rarely able to stay in the field for more than a few weeks, though smaller bands of raiders or larger groups of migrants could do much better than this. A few barbarian leaders or tribes were singled out as taking more care over arranging the supply of their forces, and in the case of Vercingetorix deliberately trying to deprive their Roman enemies of food and fodder; but that such occurrences were worth remarking upon emphasized just how rare they were.⁵⁸ Few of the barbarian tribes were capable of keeping enough warriors in one place to permit the successful prosecution of a siege.⁵⁹ Parthian invasions of the eastern provinces tended to take the form of large-scale raids which avoided defended places. In part this was a reflection of their consisting predominantly, or perhaps even exclusively, of horsemen, able to move quickly but lacking skill in siegecraft. Supply problems may also have deterred such armies from pausing for too long in one place.⁶⁰

Roman armies could operate outside the campaigning season and in inhospitable regions, but it required special care and planning for them to do so. Most campaigns were more conventional, occurring in the period from spring to early autumn and in areas where at least some of the provisions the army needed could be obtained locally. Allies were often called upon to supply Roman armies, most often with food but also with such items as clothing. Wood, either for cooking fires (the army's ration was issued unprepared) or for construction, was usually available, as was water. Food for both men and animals could usually be found locally, for a small part of the year through harvesting the crops, but most often through confiscating the food stores of the local population.⁶¹ Yet few areas could easily provide

⁵⁶ Plut. *Vit. Luc.* 11; cf. Veg. *Mil.* 3.3, 3.26. ⁵⁷ E.g. Caes. *B Gall.* 2.10–11; App. *Hisp.* 11.65, 12.68.

⁵⁸ Tac. *Germ.* 30; Caes. *B Gall.* 3.23, 7.14, 7.18, 7.20–1.

⁵⁹ E.g. Dio Cass. 56.22; Tac. *Ann.* 4. 72–3; cf. Goldsworthy (1996) 58.

⁶⁰ See Goldsworthy (1996) 63; Kennedy (1996) 83–4.

⁶¹ Roth (1999) 117–55; Erdkamp (1998) 122–40.

for a surplus population of some tens of thousands. Inevitably a considerable amount of various provisions and material always needed to be carried by the army.

How much was carried in an army's baggage train varied according to its size, the season, the nature of the campaign and the proximity of secure bases. Even with Caesar's campaigns, which are by far the best documented, it is not possible to create a full picture of his supply system, although we can deduce some of the details. A considerable sum of supplies, documents and other things such as hostages were massed in the army's baggage train, which was carefully protected whenever the Romans moved through hostile territory. This might be left and suitably guarded while the army moved off with minimal provisions and gear. This allowed the unencumbered column or columns to move far more rapidly. Yet such *expedita* forces could not survive for long without fuller logistic support, so such operations rarely lasted for more than a week or two.⁶²

Roman armies could move relatively swiftly for long periods through settled territory, where it was easier to arrange for supplies to be gathered in advance. This encouraged civil wars to be fought at a faster pace than foreign conflicts, permitting forces to move rapidly over great distances to make contact with the enemy. By this period, most foreign wars occurred in far less settled and prosperous territory, forcing Roman campaigns to take place at a much slower pace. Victory in one region might be swift, but it then took time to arrange to supply the army in the next phase of the advance, as supply dumps were established in the forward area. No Roman conqueror was ever able to rival the rapid conquests of Alexander the Great when he overran Persia (see vol. 1, pp. 391–2).⁶³

The navy

From the time of the First Punic War the Roman navy played a major part in allowing Rome to project its power throughout the Mediterranean and beyond. The development of the navy mirrored the evolution of the army, and under the early Principate it became a fully professional force. It was never an independent service, but always a part of the army. In the first century BC there were numerous occasions when fleets of hundreds of vessels were mustered. Pompey's operations against the pirates in 67 BC were on an enormous scale, involving some 500 warships supported by 120,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry. This was a combined

⁶² E.g. in 53 BC Caesar's punitive columns were to return to the army's baggage train within a week, Caes. *B Gall.* 6.33.

⁶³ Roth (1999) and Erdkamp (1998) both discuss the pace of Roman campaigning. For one view of logistic organization permitting the rapid pace of Alexander's campaigns, see Engels (1978).

operation, a massive army supporting a huge fleet, both operating under a single command structure at the head of which was Pompey himself wielding *imperium* that covered not just the Mediterranean but extended for fifty miles inland as well.⁶⁴ The limited range of oared warships ensured that fleets could never become truly independent of land bases, and hence of the military support required to secure and protect these. During the civil wars a number of naval encounters were fought on a grand scale, most notably at Naulochus in 36 BC and Actium in 31 BC. These battles were fought with essentially the same tactics as the naval clashes of earlier centuries.

Some foreign wars also included significant fighting at sea. In 56 BC Caesar's campaign against the Veneti was not decided until the Romans had defeated the Gallic fleet. By the first century BC few of Rome's opponents possessed fleets of any size. In AD 47 the former auxiliary Gannascus raided Lower Germany and the coast of Gaul, employing large numbers of small ships or boats. Corbulo, the newly arrived governor of the province, responded by massing units of the army and ships from the Rhine fleet to pursue the raiders. In a series of small actions fought on land or sea depending on where the enemy were found, the Romans defeated or drove off the Germans (Tac. *Ann.* 11.18–19). This operation was typical of the navy's role under the Principate, acting as part of the army under the same commanders and in much the same way. In many respects, the navy was simply that part of the army which usually operated on water (although its personnel could also be called upon to act on land if required).

The fleet permitted the Romans to mount invasions across seas or lakes (as in Caesar's and Claudius' invasions of Britain), helped patrolling and communications along navigable rivers, and could follow an army advancing along a coast, as famously described by Tacitus in the *Agricola*. The navy also protected the seaborne movement of supplies and material needed by armies in the field. Its independent operations were small scale, mainly combating piracy. It is difficult to estimate just how serious a problem this was at any period after the first century BC.⁶⁵ The Roman response to such problems was very similar to their response to raiding on land, with a mixture of interception of raiders and rigorous punitive action. Terms like *latrones* or *leistai* were interchangeable, meaning either bandit or pirate depending on whether the raiders operated on land or sea.⁶⁶ They presented much the same problem, to be dealt with in much the same way.

⁶⁴ On the campaign against the pirates, see App. *Mith.* 94–6; Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 26–8.

⁶⁵ See Braund (1993). For the navy in general, see Starr (1941). ⁶⁶ Braund (1993) 196–7.

III. GRAND STRATEGY AND FRONTIERS

I. *Central planning*

What is at issue, therefore, is not whether we can find examples of Roman planning, proof of which must exist on almost every page of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*. But, if any and all planning is to be defined as strategy . . . the term becomes so all-embracing that it ceases to be a useful instrument of analysis . . . Strategy has many levels of planning and even tactics can involve manoeuvring an entire army.⁶⁷

That the Romans were capable of at least some central decision making and planning is indisputable (see pp. 6–11 above). From at least the third century BC the Senate each year reviewed the number of legions and *alae* that would take the field and where they would go. Consuls normally received armies of two legions and two *alae*, praetors one legion and one *ala*. Yet if the military problem was considered to be more serious, then any magistrate could be given more units. The size of the units composing the army, and the proportion of infantry to cavalry within them, could also be varied depending on the nature of the anticipated conflict. The scale of naval support allocated to a magistrate also made clear the role planned for his forces.⁶⁸ The nature of the perceived military problem was one factor affecting the Senate's decision on these matters, but it is also clear that political factors were sometimes of equal, if not more, importance than a pragmatic assessment of the situation. It is claimed that rivals in the Senate managed to reduce the number of troops allocated to several Roman commanders fighting important campaigns, while in the late Republic men such as Pompey and Caesar received massive armies and great freedom once they were in their provinces.⁶⁹ Once again, this should not surprise us, since many more recent military operations owed their creation, development and scale to the influence of particular soldiers or politicians and their ambitions every bit as much, or even more, than cool assessment of the military situation.

In the Principate, central decision making and forward planning must have occurred to at least a similar degree. There were around thirty legions in the Roman army (see pp. 35–6, 71–2 above). These units not only provided the strongest military force in the major provinces, but also the administrators, engineers and technicians who fulfilled a host of essentially civilian or bureaucratic roles. Moving a legion, or even a significant vexillation, to another province was a major decision, altering the balance of military force in the provinces and disturbing the administration. Such decisions could only be taken by the emperor and his *consilium*, if only because he needed to prevent any senatorial governor, and potential rival, gaining control of too many troops.

⁶⁷ Whittaker (1996) 25–41.

⁶⁸ E.g. in 218 BC, Polyb. 3.40.3–13; Livy 21.25.1–14.

⁶⁹ E.g. Scipio in 205 BC, Livy 28.45.13–46.1.

Sometimes decisions were made to redistribute legions out of fear of rebellion rather than for military needs, as when Domitian abolished the practice of basing two legions in the same camp (Suet. *Dom.* 7). At other times forces were transferred to reinforce an army weakened by casualties, as in Britain in the aftermath of Boudicca's rebellion. Legions were sent from the Danube to reinforce armies operating in Armenia or Africa, although in each case the move was temporary and the unit eventually returned to its original station. Q. Junius Blaesus received *legio IX Hispana* to reinforce *III Augusta* during the struggle with Tacfarinas. At the end of his governorship, for which he was awarded triumphal honours, *legio IX* returned to Pannonia, in spite of the fact that the war was far from over. Blaesus was the uncle of Sejanus, an important factor in getting him the prestigious proconsulship for Africa and perhaps in ensuring that he received a larger army. Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.23) claims that the refusal to detract from his achievements prevented any move to keep the extra legion in the province. Once again, although political concerns had affected the decision-making process and overridden military considerations in this particular instance, this does not mean that the latter were always ignored.

Emperors closely supervised the movements of legions, and to a lesser extent of auxiliary units, at least when the latter were sent from one province to another. They also took some care over the appointment of officers, although it is not quite clear how far down the rank structure this interest extended. Some mechanism existed for transferring centurions between legions stationed in distant provinces, but it is unclear how this worked or how much care was taken over these appointments. There are some cases where we are told that generals were picked for command in important conflicts on the basis of ability as well as loyalty.⁷⁰ Tiberius advised the Senate to take into account the need for military skill when choosing a proconsul for Africa – the only senatorial province with a legionary garrison – during the rebellion of Tacfarinas.⁷¹ However, attempts to discern a system through which senators were assessed on the basis of ability before receiving important commands, or certain legions received more experienced officers because of the problems of their station, have failed to convince.⁷² Patronage dictated most of the appointments in the Roman military, as it did in so many other aspects of the Roman world. The actual ability of an individual might be taken into consideration, but it was never the sole, or even the most important, factor.

⁷⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 13.8, 14.29, *Hist.* 4.8; Dio Cass. 69.13.2.

⁷¹ Tac. *Ann.* 3.32, 3.35. Tiberius subsequently appointed Manius Lepidus, who withdrew on grounds of ill health, and then Junius Blaesus.

⁷² Contrast Birley (1988a), (1988c) with the more plausible view in Campbell (1975). Dabrowa (1993) attempts to show that officers in the Tenth legion were specially selected for ability, but does not convince. See the review by Isaac (1995).

It is also uncontroversial to state that the emperor did take decisions determining the activities of his armies in the provinces. The scope of a governor's *mandata* – the list of instructions and orders issued to each appointee – is not definitely known, but they do seem to have made clear where and under what circumstances the army of the province was permitted to take the field.⁷³ Sulla's *maiestas* law had also restricted a governor from fighting a war outside his province without the Senate's permission, but then, as throughout the Republic, the more influential senators were able to escape punishment for infractions of this. This was harder under the Empire, Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso being prosecuted under Tiberius for returning to Syria after he had been removed from office.⁷⁴ In AD 47 Corbulo, following up on his success against Gannascus, invaded the territory of the Chauci. Ordered to withdraw by Claudius, Corbulo famously exclaimed 'How happy were the Roman commanders in the old days', as he began to retreat to the west bank of the Rhine (Tac. *Ann.* 11.19–20). It is unclear how Claudius knew of his generals' actions, but it has been plausibly suggested that Corbulo's own dispatches had informed him of his actions and intentions.⁷⁵

Emperors certainly ordered any major new conquest, in part because wars of conquest required long-term preparation and the use of men and material from more than one province. Politically it was also unwise to allow governors too much freedom to fight aggressive wars lest they emerge as rivals. Most of the major wars of conquest fought under the Principate were at the very least presided over by the emperor, who made sure that he alone gained the chief glory of this expansion. Yet much of the information on which emperors based their decisions came from reports forwarded by governors, and it is possible that these men sometimes deliberately distorted the situation to encourage annexation.⁷⁶ However passive Roman emperors may have been in most respects, most scholars acknowledge that they did occasionally actively decide to conquer new provinces.

2. *Grand strategy*

No one would dispute that the Roman emperors and their *consilia* were capable of some degree of central planning.⁷⁷ Yet debate continues to rage fiercely over the context in which this activity occurred. At its heart is the question of how rational was the process which produced each decision, and whether each problem was treated individually or as part of a broad and coherent grand strategy which directed the entire empire. This in turn raises

⁷³ See Potter (1996). ⁷⁴ Potter (1996) 49. ⁷⁵ Potter (1996) 52.

⁷⁶ E.g. Commagene, Joseph. *BJ* 7.219–29, and comments in Isaac (1992) 22, 39–40.

⁷⁷ E.g. Whittaker (1996) esp. 28–30.

the question of whether Roman emperors had any long-term objectives at all and, if they did, then what these were.

Although some issues had been raised before, the debate in its current form was provoked by Luttwak's *Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (1976). This argued that the central aim of Roman policy under the Principate was to protect the empire from external threats, in order to allow the provinces to prosper and Rome to remain strong. Luttwak saw three phases in which the Roman army attempted to achieve this end by different means. In the first, under the Julio-Claudians, the army remained deployed in much the same way as it had been during the conquest period, and extensive use was made of client kings and states. In the second, the frontiers crystallized, the army being distributed in bases of various sizes along the perimeter of the provinces and the aim being to defeat any attack before or soon after it entered the empire. Finally, in the third century AD a system of defence in depth evolved which accepted enemy incursions into the provinces, choosing instead to defeat them there while defending all vital settlements and assets. This system was less satisfactory, but Luttwak did not go on to explore the military problems of late antiquity in much depth. Throughout the three phases the Roman army was depicted as behaving in essentially the same way throughout the frontier provinces of the empire. Military installations, be they forts, fortresses, linear boundaries or bridges and communication roads were constructed in a logical way to assist the army in its task. When it first appeared this book attracted considerable support, and a number of scholars, most notably Ferrill and Wheeler, have refined and staunchly defended the Luttwak model.⁷⁸

A few early reviewers, most notably Mann, were more critical of Luttwak, or at least of the assumptions behind the works which the latter had used to produce his model.⁷⁹ The most important attack came with Isaac's *Limits of Empire* (1990, rev. edn 1992), which looked at the role of the Roman army in the east. This argued that the Romans rarely if ever faced serious threats from their Parthian and Persian neighbours, or from the desert nomads. However, some regions of the eastern provinces maintained a strong resistance to Roman rule for centuries, and this required a significant part of the army to be deployed as an army of occupation. Opposition varied from banditry to open rebellion, and required the Romans to deploy detachments of soldiers in major cities and in some cases even in such small communities as villages, as well as along roads.

Isaac warned against assuming that there was a logical strategic reason for the location of every fort or base established by the Roman army, pointing out many other factors that could easily have played a role in such decisions

⁷⁸ Ferrill (1991a), (1991b); Wheeler (1991), (1993). ⁷⁹ Mann (1979).

and that once built, a fort might remain on the same site long after the original reason for its location had been forgotten. He saw no evidence of scientifically planned frontiers in the east, and doubted that the Roman mentality was capable of such things. The main task of the army during the Principate was to control the eastern provinces rather than to defend them against external enemies. Indeed, far from facing serious threats from outside, the Roman ideology remained one of expansion, aiming at eventual world empire. Thus the Romans provoked most of the conflicts with Parthia and Persia, as successive emperors dreamed of imitating Alexander's eastern conquests.⁸⁰ Isaac's book has received considerable attention and much praise. Although he only dealt with the eastern part of the empire, others have wondered whether his ideas might also be usefully applied to the west. In one case he has even been accused of not being radical enough, by a scholar who argued that Roman warfare could be even less logical and more haphazard.⁸¹

The ancient literature can accommodate elements of both views (see pp. 3–5 above). Some authors, notably Greeks like Strabo and Aelius Aristides, spoke of the Romans already owning the best part of the world and disdaining to conquer the rest, or of the Roman army as a wall around the provinces.⁸² Others clearly felt that further expansion was both possible and desirable, and criticized emperors who were less aggressive or, even worse, abandoned conquered territory.⁸³ There does not appear to have been a clear consensus.⁸⁴ We should also always remember that, as in the Republic, the increase of Rome's power did not necessarily mean the physical occupation of new provinces. Rome may have remained ideologically inclined to further expansion, but conquests, although they did occur, were far rarer than they had been in the two centuries before AD 14.

Certain emperors wanted or needed to make great conquests, but the majority did not add provinces to the empire. Political factors, the fear of successful generals becoming rivals, and the reluctance of many emperors to spend many years supervising foreign campaigns, often discouraged further expansion.⁸⁵ Although it has been suggested by Luttwak that the empire ceased to expand when it encountered peoples whom the Roman army could not easily defeat or whom the Roman system could not readily absorb, this does not seem to take account of the army's remarkable flexibility. The Romans had already conquered a diverse range of societies, and there is no real reason to believe that the Germans or Parthians were so different from other peoples that the army could not have overcome them. Whether the resources for such projects in men and material, and

⁸⁰ Isaac (1992) esp. 372–418.

⁸¹ Freeman (1996) esp. 114–15.

⁸² E.g. Strabo 4.5.32; Aristid. *Or.* 82; cf. App. *Praef.* 7.

⁸³ See discussion in Isaac (1992) 24–6.

⁸⁴ Woolf (1993) esp. 189–91.

⁸⁵ Campbell (1984).

equally the determination to complete them, were ever available is another question.

Isaac was surely right to emphasize the role of the Roman army in controlling occupied communities (see pp. 222–4 below). The legions in Syria were usually stationed in cities, and those in Egypt remained near Alexandria to control the population of that vast city.⁸⁶ Yet Roman troops were as likely to be called in to stop fighting between rival communities, or different sections within the same city, as they were to curb violence directed against Roman rule. Most of the best evidence for long-term resistance to Rome comes from Judaea and it is very difficult to know whether or not we can consider the Jews to have been typical or exceptional in this respect.

We must also remember Isaac's own point that the location of a garrison does not necessarily tell us what it was doing. Evidence of Roman troops within a town or city and away from the frontiers need not be an indication of urban resistance. The same logic would dictate that the presence of so many military installations around Aldershot in twentieth-century Britain was evidence for major unrest throughout the region, or alternatively of the proximity of an external threat. Units might be stationed in major cities because this placed them near important road junctions and made them more easily mobile. Alternatively it might be easier to supply and billet them there, while such a station would clearly be attractive to officers and men. The administrative and technical skills of the legions were valuable assets which aided the functioning of many provinces. The distinction between policing and occupation is very difficult to draw and depends to a great extent on political viewpoint. Roman units may have been stationed in cities for any or all of these reasons.

Yet Isaac acknowledged that there were sometimes external threats facing the Roman army in the east, even if he is inclined to believe that these were not its most important concern. (Indeed, both Luttwak and Isaac were far more flexible in their interpretation of the evidence than many of their supporters or critics would suggest.) It is also undeniable that, outside Syria, Egypt and some of the other eastern provinces, the majority of Roman units were stationed near the fringes of the empire. Soldiers may not have been quite as unfamiliar a sight within settled provinces as was once thought, nor the garrisons of forts as static as traditionally believed, but this does not alter the fact that most Roman bases under the Principate were near the external borders of frontier provinces. In some cases army bases appear to have been positioned away from areas with the highest civilian population.⁸⁷ Whatever the Romans' concept of what a frontier was, and whether their ideology was aggressive or defensive, we do need

⁸⁶ Isaac (1992) *passim*; Alston (1995) 74–9.

⁸⁷ Pigott (1958).

to explain why such a strong military presence was felt necessary in these areas for such long periods.

Some of the activities of the army in these regions continue to baffle scholars. There is no real consensus as to what such monumental linear boundaries as the walls in northern Britain or between the Rhine and Danube in Germany were for and how they functioned. Almost as puzzling are cases where Roman soldiers were distributed in very small detachments, often less than ten men, manning watchtowers, constructed in lines following roads or along ridges.⁸⁸ Such deployments seem to make little sense if the primary aim of the Roman army was to defend the provinces since any serious attack would surely have overwhelmed these weak defences.

Neither the view of the Roman empire during the Principate as essentially defensive, nor the view that it was aggressive and still hoping to expand, explains properly what the army was actually doing. Mattern has recently suggested that the defensive–offensive distinction is anachronistic, and that we should view Roman foreign relations more in terms of concepts of honour and power.⁸⁹ The theme of her book was essentially the ideology of empire, and it did not really explain how the army operated or whether or not its activities were effective. The shift in emphasis was very useful, for (as discussed at pp. 11–29 above) it is important to understand how the Romans conceived of their relations with other peoples, and it is within this framework that we should attempt to understand what their armed forces were actually doing.

For all the insights generated by this debate, the question remains of whether or not the Romans developed something which could reasonably be described as grand strategy. As with so many labels, there is a tendency for each contributor in the debate to provide his own definition for this term, making it easier to prove that the Romans either did or did not have one. The term was created in the twentieth century, and most of the definitions employed by modern strategic literature assume the existence of institutions and ideas utterly alien to the Roman empire. For most modern states the ideal of international affairs is peaceful coexistence with their neighbours. Each state is considered to have a right to govern itself in its own way and by its own laws. In the modern world war is the anomaly, shattering the natural state of peace. For many societies in the ancient world the reverse was true, and peace was an interruption of the normal international hostility.⁹⁰ The Romans were inclined to think of peace as the product of an enemy's utter defeat, hence the verb 'to pacify' (*pacare*) was a euphemism for 'to defeat'.⁹¹

⁸⁸ E.g. Isaac (1992) 136, 200–6, 252; Alston (1995) 81–3, 85, 87; Bishop (1999) esp. 113.

⁸⁹ Mattern (1999) esp. 162–210; see also the discussion in Lendon (2002).

⁹⁰ Dawson (1996). ⁹¹ Woolf (1993) 172–89.

Peaceful coexistence with other nations, and most of all former enemies, was never a Roman aspiration.

In some way we must relate our understanding of Roman ideology to the reality of military deployment in the frontier zones, many areas of which were constantly occupied for centuries on end. It is therefore worth considering the army's deployment in these areas and trying to reconstruct what it was doing. In doing so we must try to look at the fringes of the Roman empire from both directions.

3. *The other side of the hill*

We are the Little Folk – we!
Too small to love or to hate.
Leave us alone and you'll see
How we can drag down the Great!
We are the worm in the wood!
We are the rot in the root!

Rudyard Kipling, 'A Pict's Song',
from *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906)

The Roman empire was large and powerful. Reaching the peak of its territorial extent in the second century and early third century AD it was to suffer some reduction in area but remain substantially intact for most of the next two hundred years. No rival power possessed strength in any way comparable to Rome's, and throughout the Principate no conflict ever threatened the very existence of the empire. Realization of Rome's overwhelming might and the bias of our sources have tended to focus attention on Roman aims and ambitions to the exclusion of those of their contemporaries. It is worth beginning our consideration of the empire's frontiers with some discussion of the peoples on the outside.

Parthia, and its successor Sasanid Persia, were the largest states whose territory bordered on the empire. On a few occasions Parthian or Persian armies overran much of Syria, threatening Antioch and reaching the Mediterranean coast, but they were never able to establish control of this area. Even more frequently Roman armies went down the Euphrates and sacked Ctesiphon, again without ever remaining there permanently. In the main the conflicts between the two states focused around control of border areas, especially the kingdom of Armenia and later Mesopotamia. Isaac argued that the Romans were usually the aggressors in these conflicts, and that Parthian and Persian ambitions never really extended to more than domination of the contested border provinces.⁹² Although some have disputed this interpretation of Roman-Parthian relations it does

⁹² Isaac (1992) 19–53.



Figure 3.4 Coin of Augustus depicting the recovery from the Parthians of the standards lost by Crassus in his disastrous defeat at Carrhae.

seem that the eastern kingdom lacked the strength to conquer Rome's eastern possessions.⁹³ Parthian and Persian monarchs had limited power, relying on support from the main noblemen to maintain control and form armies, and these men always threatened to become rivals. Nor was Rome the only neighbour of the eastern kingdom, and the Romans were aware that some of their victories came at a time when Parthia faced serious threats from other directions or was suffering from serious internal problems.⁹⁴

It is clear that some modern commentators exaggerate the real threat posed to the Roman east by both the Parthians and Persians.⁹⁵ We should, however, be cautious before assuming that the Romans appreciated this. Carthage does not appear to have posed a real threat to Rome in 149 BC, but the Romans do seem to have genuinely feared their old enemy.⁹⁶ Former opponents were always treated with suspicion unless they had ceased to be even a potential threat to Rome. The border with Parthia presented different problems from frontier areas elsewhere. Raiding was less likely, but there was the real possibility of a full-scale war, such a conflict breaking out on average every generation (fig. 3.4). Diplomatic contact was maintained on a regular basis with the Parthian or Persian monarch. Both sides wanted to dominate the disputed border territories and were fully capable of planning to seize control in Armenia by supporting claimants to its throne. At least until the fourth century, Roman emperors continued to hope for ultimate victory over Parthia or Persia, but they were never able to achieve this. On this frontier, the aim of further conquest was not abandoned but that does not mean that lesser aims, including those of defence, were not also

⁹³ Campbell (1993). ⁹⁴ Kennedy (1996) 67–90. ⁹⁵ Isaac (1992) 19–53.

⁹⁶ Rich (1993) 38–68, esp. 64.

pursued. The threat of war was used by Rome to achieve lesser diplomatic ends.

Nowhere else did the Romans face such a large, relatively unified state or kingdom. Most of their neighbours on the other frontiers were tribal peoples whose socio-political organization was loose and central authority weak. If the Parthians lacked the military capacity to invade and permanently occupy Roman territory other than on their immediate borders, let alone destroy Rome itself, this was even more true of the tribal peoples. Until very late antiquity no tribal peoples from outside the empire were ever able to conquer and permanently occupy all or part of a Roman province (regions such as Dacia and northernmost Britain being deliberately abandoned rather than taken by force). Tribal armies were impermanent, mustering for short campaigns and then dispersing, with only the bodyguards and attendants of powerful chieftains remaining permanently under arms. The numbers of the latter were few, only the highly exceptional leaders of tribal confederations such as Arminius, Maroboduus or Decebalus maintaining sizeable armies of retainers. The power of such charismatic leaders was personal and temporary, their confederations collapsing as soon as the leader died. Under normal circumstances a number of chieftains or kings exercised power at the same time, the prestige and authority of each varying with their wealth and military reputation. None had the power to organize concerted campaigns waged by sizeable armies, and certainly not to develop a concerted strategy pursued over years.

There were three scenarios which could bring all or part of a tribe into conflict with Rome. The first was as a response to Roman attacks, when the tribal army might be mustered and an attempt made to confront the Roman force in battle. Secondly, the tribe might migrate to settle on land within a province, usually because its own territory could no longer support the population or as a result of pressure exerted by other tribes. Finally the tribe could attack a Roman province or ally. Such an attack usually took the form of a raid on a greater or lesser scale, with the main aim of acquiring booty. Raiding was by far the most common military activity for nearly all of these peoples. Sometimes such an attack, especially those delivered on a larger scale, might be a response to Roman offensive actions, but most were simply delivered when the raiders believed that the target was vulnerable. In broad terms the style of warfare and the military capacity of the tribal or barbarian peoples with whom Rome came into contact does not appear to have significantly developed from the second century BC to the fourth century AD.⁹⁷ Some peoples were more aggressive than others, and there must also have been considerable variation over time, but there appear to have been

⁹⁷ Very many of the conclusions in Elton's (1996b) assessment of the methods of warfare of Roman and barbarian nations in late antiquity hold good for much of the earlier period.

relatively few peaceful societies which came into contact with Rome.⁹⁸ Rome's often aggressive foreign policy may in any case have prompted some more peacefully inclined communities to turn to violence.⁹⁹

Raiding does appear to have been endemic in the tribal societies of Spain, Britain, Gaul, Germany, Thrace, Illyria and Africa. Caesar claimed that the Helvetii migrated to occupy lands which would give them more opportunity to raid their neighbours (*B Gall.* 1.2). We are told that German tribes tried to keep a strip of depopulated land around their borders as a protection against enemy raids. This was also a measure of a tribe's martial prowess and thus a deterrent to attacks. The Belgian tribes grew thick thorn hedges as boundary markers that were intended to delay raiding groups. They may also have been a sign that crossing them would be met with force, and it was probably no coincidence that Caesar's army had to fight a battle at the Sambre soon after passing such a barrier (*B Gall.* 2.17, 6.23). The archaeological record of weapons burials in many regions of Europe confirms a picture of societies in which martial symbols were very important, and it is implausible to suggest that many Celtic tribes were not warlike warrior societies.¹⁰⁰

Our sources inevitably only report raids carried out on a large scale, usually by thousands of warriors. Only well-established leaders in reasonably united tribes could ever have mustered such forces. The warriors in many societies were strongly independent, choosing whether or not to join a leader who proclaimed that he was to lead a raid. Most raiding bands were probably much smaller. Even Ammianus, who provides far more detailed accounts of activities in the frontier provinces than any earlier source, never specifically mentions groups of fewer than 400 marauders.¹⁰¹ The distribution of Roman troops in penny packets to man lines of watchtowers might make a lot more sense if they were facing raids by equally small or smaller groups of warriors. The distinction between warfare and banditry blurs at this level, but there are many hints that small-scale violence was common in the empire.¹⁰²

Isaac could see no evidence that the Arabian nomads posed a serious threat to the Roman frontier until late antiquity. Small-scale raiding, if it did occur, and here the evidence is not good enough to say one way or the other, did not cause problems that would have worried the Roman government or challenged Roman authority.¹⁰³ In Africa there is far more

⁹⁸ Treaties with Germanic peoples did treat some as more peacefully inclined, and therefore permitted more access to Roman territory, e.g. Tac. *Germ.* 41; Dio Cass. 72.11.2–3.

⁹⁹ Freeman (1996) 102, 114 suggests that the Roman occupation of Arabia may have created a military problem there. The evidence in this case is insufficient to prove the case one way or the other, but we must certainly consider the possibility that this occurred there and/or elsewhere.

¹⁰⁰ *Contra* Webster (1994).

¹⁰¹ Elton (1996b) 206, who argues that smaller groups may have been stopped by the *limitanei*.

¹⁰² Bishop (1999) 113–14. ¹⁰³ Isaac (1992) 72–4.

evidence that the nomads were seen by the Roman army as posing a problem and efforts were made to control their movements.¹⁰⁴ There is, of course, no good reason to assume that nomadic peoples in different regions should all behave in the same way. Apart from when a strong leader such as Tacfarinas emerged, it seems that whatever raiding was carried out by African nomads was on a small scale. Such attacks had only local impact, and in themselves did not threaten Roman power. Yet such forays were only one part of warfare as understood and practised by these peoples.

Tacitus claimed that Tacfarinas began his marauding career with a small group of followers. With each small success his reputation grew, swelling the numbers of his followers, and permitting more frequent, larger-scale and deeper attacks. The same pattern continued throughout his career, successes boosting and failures damaging his reputation and affecting his power.¹⁰⁵ Successful raids, whatever their scale, encouraged further attacks. Each dented Rome's reputation for invincibility and encouraged other leaders to try to copy the success. Therefore, while such little forays into Roman territory did not have a serious impact on Roman power, they dented it ever so slightly and invited more and bigger assaults. Few of the tribal peoples can have had much sense of the real size and power of Rome or the military resources at its disposal. When we talk of the limited geographical information available to the Romans (see p. 5 above), we should never forget that considerably less even than this was available to most of their opponents, especially in non-literate cultures. With hindsight we can clearly see that no tribe had the resources to win a permanent military victory over Rome. At best they could persuade the Romans that it would require too much effort to conquer them and so persuade them to go away. We know this, but in most cases many of the communities who came into conflict with the Romans did not.

The local impression of Roman strength was what mattered. Where the provinces were perceived to be weak, they would be attacked, for no more reason than that their prosperity offered a good prospect of gain and glory. As we have seen earlier the tribal peoples are depicted in our sources as inclined to act on sudden rumours and not according to any long-term plan. While this is doubtless a great oversimplification, it surely must contain more than a grain of truth.

4. *The Roman army on the frontiers*

As discussed in chapter 2 (pp. 71–2 above), for most of the Principate the Roman army consisted of about thirty legions, supported by auxiliary troops and the navy. Conventionally, although without much evidence, it is

¹⁰⁴ Rushworth (1996) 297–316.

¹⁰⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 2.52, 3.20–1, 3.73–4, 4.23–5.

assumed that the auxiliaries roughly equalled the number of citizen troops. Assuming a strength of 5,000 men for each legion, roughly the same for the auxiliaries, and allowing for the fleet and other miscellaneous units, the Roman army numbered somewhere between 300,000 and 400,000 men, though probably near the lower end of this range. This was a very small proportion of the population of the empire, even if the lowest modern estimates are accepted. It was also a small force to control such a vast empire. Some troops, especially in the eastern provinces, but also in some areas elsewhere, were stationed in cities and acted as internal policemen or an occupying force. Most were spread around the frontiers, but not evenly distributed. Some provinces, most notably Britain, received disproportionately large garrisons for their size. Even within Britain the troops were concentrated in certain areas and, if all of the forts on either of the walls were ever entirely occupied by full garrisons, then these must have been some of the densest long-term troop concentrations in the entire empire. Yet this garrison appears to have been necessary, with problems occurring when it was significantly reduced.¹⁰⁶

The Roman army was small for the area of ground that it occupied, but it was a professional and extremely efficient force. As we have seen it was flexible enough to adapt to local conditions and defeat almost any opponent. Yet its behaviour was consistently aggressive in all types of campaign, Roman commanders seizing the initiative and invariably mounting offensives. If it did not defeat the enemy in battle, either through choice or because it would not be drawn into open confrontation, then the Roman army targeted communities, strongholds and agricultural resources. A small, highly efficient army was not suited to the static defence of wide frontiers even if it had wanted to be. The Romans did not have the manpower to garrison every settlement or position of importance, and nor would this have been a sensible use of highly trained soldiers. In this period few Roman forts were defensive in the sense that medieval castles could be seen as defensive. Their fortifications were modest, but they provided secure bases and living quarters for large numbers of troops who were intended to operate as mobile field forces.

For centuries on end many Roman provinces were bordered by peoples for whom raiding was a normal part of life and a source of aristocratic prestige. For whatever reasons, the Romans did not choose to annex the lands of the vast majority of the peoples. The prosperity which unquestionably developed in the provinces provided an additional incentive for raids, while Roman presence restricted the free movement of tribes who came under pressure from others. It was difficult to intercept all raids, even when they were retiring, for it required rapid communications, quick responses by local officers and no small degree of luck to catch marauders. Roman

¹⁰⁶ Todd (1999) 96–9, 132–8.

armies were better suited to mounting punitive expeditions, often on a massive scale, to inflict savage blows on the communities held responsible for the raids. By such overwhelming attacks, real or threatened, tribes could be overawed into submission.

The Roman empire was not based upon peaceful coexistence with its neighbours but on warlike domination. This was achieved through various means. Roman power extended through military force and active diplomacy well beyond what would be considered by modern standards the boundaries of the empire. No Roman ever doubted his right to do this, and Roman actions were unfettered by any concept of the rights of other races. The Roman empire always extended to include many peoples considered to be under Roman power but whose territory was not physically occupied. The Roman army remained best suited to mobile action. Sometimes it constructed networks of fortifications as solid bases from which to launch its offensives. One of the most striking features of Hadrian's Wall was the almost excessive number of gateways through it.¹⁰⁷ From its creation it was never intended as a barrier to the forward movements of the army. Yet such solid features could serve a purpose in controlling the movement of population, regulating trade and making it easier to prevent or discover small raiding parties. Ultimately, the most important part of any system, whether it was a linear barrier or line of forts, fortlets and towers, was not the physical structures themselves but the men manning them.

Much of the warfare fought around the fringes of the Roman empire was very small scale. Yet there was no clear division between low- and high-intensity threats, and one could very easily turn into the other. For this reason the army had to try to cope with all types of warfare, from intercepting groups of a few raiding warriors to launching grand attacks on neighbouring tribes. It was an on-going struggle, for memories of Roman power among the tribes were not long lived and any cracks in the façade of Roman majesty invited attacks to avenge old wrongs. At some periods raiding grew in scale until Roman provinces were seriously disturbed, and failure to deal with this reflected very badly on the emperor.¹⁰⁸ Such occasions were comparatively rare until the third century and ultimately had to be dealt with by major military action. The attacks on Moesia by Decebalus and the humiliation of Domitian led to the conquest of Dacia under Trajan. The relentless pursuit of victory characteristic of the Romans sometimes led to such decisive action. Lesser setbacks could be adequately dealt with by inflicting a defeat on a tribe, accepting their surrender but not actually occupying their land on a permanent basis.

The peoples beyond the frontiers in Europe, Africa and parts of the east were loosely organized into tribes. The power of each group and of leaders

¹⁰⁷ Breeze and Dobson (1987) 60–1.

¹⁰⁸ E.g. Tac. *Ann.* 4.74; Dio Cass. 67.6.1–9.6.

among them fluctuated greatly over time. None presented a concerted and consistent threat to the empire but they did cause local problems. It must seriously be questioned whether in such circumstances a grand strategy would have been of any practical use to a Roman emperor. Most of the problems were so small scale that they were most easily dealt with on the spot. An emperor did not need to know about the activities of hundreds or thousands of petty kings and chieftains, or bandit leaders, and did not have the time – even if he had the inclination – to make decisions relating to any but the most powerful. He controlled the overall distribution of the army, deciding when to shift troops from one province to another, and deciding on or approving major campaigns outside the provinces. Beyond this, and the desire to prevent the movement of troops for one operation causing problems in other areas, it is hard to see how any form of grand strategy could have coped with so many local, ever-changing problems. The Romans did not exist in a world of a relatively small number of comparably powerful competing states with clear policies of their own, but in a far less organized environment. The debate over grand strategy may no longer be a helpful one.

IV. CIVIL WARS

Civil wars occurred with frequency between 88 and 31 BC, again in AD 68–9 and 193, and once more became common after the death of Caracalla. The strategy in such conflicts was always simple and wars ended with the death of one of the rival leaders. Compromises, as between Severus and Albinus, were inevitably temporary. Such campaigns were not about domination or overawing the enemy but achieving a clear decisive victory. Most were decided by one or more pitched battles. The armies involved in these actions were some of the largest ever put into the field by the professional army, for victory went more often to numbers and determination than tactical subtlety. Often the need to gain a numerical advantage resulted in hastily raised and poorly trained units taking the field to bolster the size of the army. The forces were often composites, not only containing a mix of raw and veteran troops, but also units from several provinces who were unused to operating together and were seldom given the time to practise doing so. Battles were often confused, long-drawn-out slogging matches, as the two sides ground away at each other.

There was always an element of chance in determining the balance of power during a civil war, for any governor at the head of significant numbers of troops could become a major player if he was able to win their loyalty. Occasionally men were able to create an army after the war had begun. Pompey raised legions on his own initiative during the struggle between Sulla and the Marians, and so became too powerful for either side to ignore.

Catiline was unable to recruit, train and equip sufficient soldiers to avoid the swift defeat of his bid for power. Some conflicts were anticipated and prepared for. The years leading up to Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon had seen Pompey securing command of an army comparable in size to that of his rival, while the divisions of power between the conspirators and Caesarians after 44 BC had much more to do with securing their position against other Roman leaders than facing external foes.

Under the Principate emperors took great care to maintain the loyalty of the army (see pp. 185–92 above). The size of provincial armies was limited and the activities of governors closely observed. Domitian abandoned the practice of allowing two legions to share the same camp to make it harder for mutiny or rebellion to spread. Similarly limits were placed on the savings each soldier was permitted to keep in the unit's treasury, to deny potential usurpers this convenient source of funds (Suet. *Dom.* 7). Yet in other respects the army was not deployed to defend the emperor against potential rivals. As noted in chapter 2 (pp. 72–4 above) this began to change when Severus bolstered the garrison of Italy and augmented the guard units in Rome. This was an important stage in the development of the personal armies which guaranteed the security of later emperors.

Once a civil war began it was usually pursued with the same aggression and combination of force and diplomacy as a foreign war. Lacking any inherent tactical or organizational advantage over the enemy, commanders were perhaps a little more cautious in risking battle, but such decisions were rarely lightly made in campaigns even against foreign foes, and the difference was mainly one of degree. Though the differences between rival leaders could rarely be reconciled, it was common to encourage the defection of enemy troops or civilian communities. Most civil wars were fought within the provinces or in Italy itself, and this usually ensured that the commanders had far more detailed geographical information available to them. Armies were also able to make use of the communications infrastructure of roads and canals to move men or material more quickly than was usually possible beyond the frontiers. The control of major towns and cities, most of all Rome itself, brought political advantage, but ultimately civil wars were decided by military force. It was not Pompey's decision to abandon Italy in 49 BC that lost him the Civil War, but his failure to beat Caesar in the Macedonian campaign. As long as a rival leader was alive and maintained the loyalty of significant numbers of soldiers, then he could only be defeated by force.

CHAPTER 4

BATTLE

CATHERINE M. GILLIVER

Throughout the period of the late Republic and Principate Rome was the dominant military force in the Mediterranean. With the exception of a few noted and quite spectacular disasters it was not until the latter part of the period that Roman military superiority came to be challenged regularly. There is a wealth of archaeological and epigraphic evidence relating to the Roman imperial army, its arms and equipment, its organization and rank structure, its fortifications, its religious beliefs and practices and so on. The majority of studies of the Roman army, whether for reasons of evidence or because of the prevailing social and political atmosphere, have tended to concentrate on these issues rather than on the army as a fighting force.¹ It is only in the last decade or so that this imbalance has begun to be redressed.²

When it comes to actual fighting the evidence (except for Caesar's campaigns) is far less extensive. Narratives of campaigns by historians of the imperial period often lack the detail of earlier writers such as Polybius and Livy, and though Tacitus, the 'most unmilitary of historians', might have complained about the lack of wars of conquest and battles to describe in his histories, when he has the opportunity with the Parthian campaigns under Nero, he deals with them in an almost cursory fashion (*Ann.* 4.33). Events in Rome were much more interesting. The *virtus* of the battlefield surrenders to the vice of the imperial bedchamber.

The descriptions of engagements that survive are of course shaped by the different expectations of ancient literature. Caesar's commentaries on his Gallic and civil war campaigns provide some of the best accounts of warfare that survive from antiquity. They are packed full of military details, and their value is enhanced because they are eye-witness accounts, or compiled from the reports of subordinates. Some of Caesar's descriptions may lack the heightened drama of more conventional historical narratives, but despite the propaganda element in his works, much of their value to the military historian lies in his avoidance of literary formulas common in

¹ Parker (1928); Robinson (1975); Webster (1985); Keppie (1984), (1997); Le Bohec (1993); Marchant (1990); Bishop and Coulston (1993).

² Lee (1996); Goldsworthy (1996); Gilliver (1999); Lendon (1999, 2005); Sabin (2000, 2007); Kagan (2006); Zhmodikov (2000).

histories. The latter were often more concerned with the moral education and entertainment of their audience than in accurate reporting of events, and warfare offered plenty of opportunity for entertaining drama.

Whereas sieges gave greater scope for literary variation because the actions of attacker and defender could be very unpredictable, the pitched battle narrative can be rather formulaic in structure. The reported speeches of the opposing generals, an opportunity for rhetorical flourish rather than accurate description, might be given significantly greater emphasis than the more 'military' aspects of battle – the deployments and fighting, flight and slaughter.³ Accounts of civil war battles might include the literary theme or *topos* of close relatives meeting on opposing sides in battle and killing one another in tragic ignorance of their identity, not because such a misfortune actually happened, but to highlight the awfulness of civil war.⁴ Appian likes the idea of opposing sides in civil war going into battle in unnatural silence, omitting the war-cry because it is a waste of energy against fellow (disciplined) Romans. In fact they did raise a war-cry.⁵ Meanwhile Cassius Dio's description (75.12) of the late second-century siege of Byzantium by Severan forces includes such 'old favourites' as using women's hair as rope (a variation on it being used to power torsion catapults), the eating of soaked leather to stave off starvation, and accusations of cannibalism. Historical accounts of battles and sieges can be so stuffed full of such *topoi* that some would compare them to a post-match football analysis, though, like the football analysis this does not necessarily diminish their accuracy. The battle narrative can appear formulaic precisely because pitched battles frequently developed as a predictable series of events.

Depictions of warfare and combat abound in Roman culture of the imperial period. A graphic pitched battle narrative or detailed description of a siege (complete with gruesome embellishments) was a must for any decent history, as even Tacitus recognized. Despite the comparative rarity of such events in this era the growing use of iconographic evidence, especially for propaganda purposes, ensured that an increasingly demilitarized population was none the less exposed to images of fighting and military success. The sculptural evidence, whether propaganda monuments in the capital such as Trajan's column or private tombstones in the frontier zones, can, like the literary, be subject to quite a high degree of stylization. Sculpture does not necessarily attempt to provide an accurate account of an event or campaign and some sculptors, primarily those working in the capital, may never have seen Roman soldiers properly equipped for war, let alone actually fighting. The sculpture from the frontier zones, whether private funerary

³ Hansen (1993).

⁴ Livy, *Epit. Per.* 79; Sen. *Epigr.* 69, 70; Tac. *Hist.* 3.25; 3.51; for further discussion of this *topos*, see Woodman (1998a).

⁵ App. *B Civ.* 2.79, 3.68; on raising a war cry, Caes. *B Civ.* 3.92; *B Hisp.* 31.

monuments or public sculpture such as the Tropaeum Traiani at Adamklissi, is frequently regarded as providing a more accurate representation of the equipment and actions of soldiers, because the artists were a part of the military society they were depicting.⁶ The inhabitants of Rome saw soldiers of the urban units and those seconded from the frontier provinces; they even witnessed re-enactments of successful operations from campaigns as part of the victory celebrations (Suet. *Claud.* 21), but this would not have provided anything like a realistic impression of pitched battle or siege warfare.

I. TACTICAL MANUALS

Contemporary Roman handbooks are valuable texts that describe or prescribe a range of military formations and procedures, or provide the blueprints for military machines such as catapults. The latter tend to be highly technical and aimed squarely at army engineers and surveyors. Although they provide such detailed instructions on the construction and maintenance of engines of war that modern scholars have used them to build working reconstructions of catapults, they lack advice on the practical application of the weapons in the field. In addition, writers of such didactic literature often reproduced material from earlier works despite it being obsolete, such as Heron's description of a centuries-old catapult.⁷

More general manuals on warfare are much more accessible to the ordinary reader, whether ancient or modern.⁸ Such was the genre of didactic literature that even philosophers with no military experience claimed that their manuals on warfare were of practical value. Some are clearly not, such as those produced in the early imperial period that describe the organization and manoeuvres of the Macedonian phalanx, though Arrian's version of this in his *Tactica* included (II.1–2) an anomalous but extremely useful description of the *hippica gymnasia*, an elaborate series of exercises carried out by auxiliary cavalry units at the Roman equivalent of a military tattoo exhibiting the skill and manoeuvrability of the cavalry.⁹ Despite their authors' lack of experience some of these manuals can provide valuable evidence for military practices, because they are based on earlier works and because much of what they say is timeless and often basic but sound military sense. The advice of the early imperial Greek philosopher Onasander, for example, is frequently very well illustrated by the *Strategemata*, examples of military stratagems collected by Frontinus, a writer of handbooks and one of Rome's leading generals in the late first century AD. These textbooks describe contemporary, or past, practices rather than recommend new theories, and for

⁶ Bishop and Coulston (1993) 20–8.

⁷ Cf. Vitruvius *De arch.* 10.14.7; Aelian *Tact.* 27.1; Marsden (1971).

⁸ Campbell (1987); Spaulding (1933).

⁹ Kiechle (1964); Wheeler (1977), (1978); Stadter (1978), (1980); Hyland (1993).

this reason can provide valuable insights into military procedures, tactical thinking and Roman understanding of success in war.

II. LAND BATTLE

While the set-piece battle with its formulaic structure was a requirement of ancient literature, it was also perceived in Roman military thinking as providing the most likely means of achieving victory against an enemy. In pitched battle the Romans knew that they were unlikely to experience a reverse (Tac. *Ann.* 1.68); when it came, defeat by a foreign enemy was rarely in pitched battle, but was usually as a result of an attack or ambush on an army on the march.¹⁰ For a commander seeking an impressive victory during either the late Republic or the imperial period, pitched battle could bring speedy success and political advancement, for in the Roman view it gave the greatest and most honourable results. In civil war it could be even more important as the security of a future emperor might depend on having proved himself in battle, and a swift result enabled a successful candidate to return to Rome for acclamation by the Senate (see pp. 120–1 above). Historical accounts comment on the eagerness of even the rank and file to commit to battle. Historians are keen to emphasize the bloodiness of civil war and lack of control among lower-class soldiers, so almost certainly place undue stress on this: soldiers might be keen to enter battle against foreign enemies too if their morale was high.¹¹ The eagerness of the two lines of infantry to get into action at Pharsalus, as reported by Caesar, is likely to have been encouraged by a combination of factors, including morale, the quality of leadership and perhaps a desire on the part of veteran troops to ‘get it over and done with’ once the two generals had finally committed to pitched battle.

1. Deployment

The perceived importance of pitched battle meant that commanders were often very willing to accept battle, and sometimes precipitated it regardless of difficulties such as adverse terrain.¹² Comments on terrain are a regular feature of the pitched battle narrative, especially if it was difficult, usually meaning hilly, boggy or badly cut up by natural obstacles.¹³ At the second battle of Cremona in AD 69 the opposing armies established their centres on the narrow *via Postumia*, perhaps the only clearly recognizable topographical feature. The fields themselves were criss-crossed by irrigation ditches and in many of them vines were being cultivated, along with the trees which

¹⁰ Dio Cass. 56.20; Tac. *Ann.* 14.32; Joseph. *Bj* 2.540–5. ¹¹ Tac. *Ann.* 14.36; *Agr.* 35.

¹² Tac. *Agr.* 35; *Hist.* 5.14. ¹³ Caes. *B Gall.* 2.22; Tac. *Hist.* 2.41; Cic. *Fam.* 10.30.

were grown to serve as supports for the vines and which severely hampered the proper deployment of units because they simply could not see what was going on. The attempt to deploy in darkness added to the confusion, with the result that on the Flavian side, although the standards had some kind of order to them, the various units and centuries were not necessarily in contact with their standards (Tac. *Hist.* 3.21).

Such circumstances were hardly ideal though, and when possible commanders chose flatter, more open ground on which to deploy, perhaps on a slight rise so that missiles could be thrown with greater effect and ranks charge with greater impetus. This also gave a psychological advantage of appearance of strength, the enemy being able to see the whole army.¹⁴ The variety of forces Roman armies had available ensured that when battle was accepted under less than favourable topographical circumstances (that is, not on open, reasonably level ground), they could none the less still operate with considerable success.¹⁵ Armies on the defensive made careful use of terrain in making their deployments to ensure that they were not outflanked, and might aim to engage under very specific topographic circumstances, while battlefields with unsuitable terrain or which left armies vulnerable to flank attacks might be further adapted before engagement.¹⁶

Field engineering played a major role in Rome's military success, as Corbulo was aware when he pronounced the virtues of the *dolabra* (Frontin. *Str.* 4.7.2). Battlefields could be prepared through the digging of trenches to limit the area of operations and protect infantry from outflanking attacks, through the fortifying of small redoubts for the siting of bolt-firing catapults, through the filling in of ditches to improve communications or through the setting of obstacles in the battlefield to hamper the advance of one side and lay it open to missile attack once its ranks had become disordered.¹⁷ Peacetime training at entrenching, the use of the army in civilian construction projects and the practice of entrenching camp nightly when on campaign ensured that soldiers were used to this kind of physical labour, and such operations could be carried out without significant risk. The preparation of battlefields in this way is comparatively rare, however, unlike the ubiquitous marching camp (see pp. 66–7 above), which was usually fortified before a Roman army accepted pitched battle and served as 'a shelter for the conqueror, a refuge for the vanquished' (Livy 44.39).

It was unusual for an army to march a long distance and then fight a battle without first resting. It was very unusual for a Roman army to face battle without a marching camp nearby; if necessary one would be built during combat by troops not engaged in the fighting or withdrawn from

¹⁴ Tac. *Agr.* 35. ¹⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 2.14; *Hist.* 2.25–45, 3.16–25; Cic. *Fam.* 10.30; App. *B Civ.* 3.66–72.

¹⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 14.34; Arr. *Expediitio contra Alanos* 19.

¹⁷ Frontin. *Str.* 2.3.17; Caes. *B Gall.* 2.8; Tac. *Hist.* 2.25; Dio Cass. 76.6.

the rear ranks for that purpose.¹⁸ At Forum Gallorum in 43 BC, on learning that his side had been ambushed, the quaestor Torquatus automatically directed troops not involved in the fighting to entrench a camp to the rear of the action. Torquatus' camp served as a rallying point for retreating and newly arriving forces, which were able to overturn Antony's initial success. The camp allowed the army to spend a secure night before battle, even though sleep might be impossible because of tension or the attentions of the enemy (Tac. *Ann.* 2.13). Marching camps were usually garrisoned by newly recruited legions, veteran troops and army servants, but were an obvious target for the enemy force. This was particularly the case in civil war, since both sides usually built camps before battle and capturing the enemy's camp was a part of achieving victory, ensuring that the defeated side could not easily regroup.¹⁹ The capture of an enemy's marching camp in civil war also provided a welcome opportunity for plunder (Caes. *B Civ.* 3.96), since captured prisoners were mostly fellow citizens and could not be sold for profit. It was usually from the marching camp that an army deployed for battle directly on to the battlefield or after a short march.

There were few significant alterations in the basics of troop deployment in the period under study, and the battle tactics in the civil wars of the late second century AD were not dissimilar from those of the first century BC. The move from manipular to cohortal legions necessitated some shift, principally because of the phasing out of the *velites* (see vol. 1, pp. 356–7), but even in the imperial period the cohortal legion could include differently equipped soldiers.²⁰ As discussed in chapter 2 (pp. 58–63), the image of homogeneity in Roman equipment is decreasingly credible.²¹ It is highly likely, and indeed only to be expected given the extent of the Roman world, that throughout the empire there was a significant degree of regional variation in military equipment along with differences in deployments and fighting styles to respond to different threats. Caesar's legionaries discovered this in Spain where they were put off by the 'barbarian' fighting style of fellow legionaries, and with units permanently stationed in provinces in the empire it is likely that these differences became accentuated.²²

The screen of light infantry, seen as so integral a part of the manipular legion, had all but disappeared in the late Republic, and by Caesar's time it was the 'heavy infantry' rather than lightly armed skirmishers who began battles, whether fighting against 'barbarian' Gauls and Germans or fellow Romans.²³ In general, though, the deployment of infantry and cavalry in the Roman battle line was not greatly different from that of the armies of the

¹⁸ Cic. *Fam.* 10.30; Tac. *Ann.* 2.21.

¹⁹ Caes. *B Gall.* 1.24, 2.24; *B Civ.* 3.96–7; App. *B Civ.* 1.82, 2.81; Dio Cass. 76.6.

²⁰ Arr. *Expediatio contra Alanos* 16–18; Balty and van Rengen (1993).

²¹ Bishop and Coulston (1993); Rossi (1971); Settis et al. (1988).

²² Caes. *B Civ.* 1.44; *B Afr.* 71. ²³ Caes. *B Gall.* 1.24, 1.52; *B Civ.* 3.92–3.

middle Republic described by Polybius: the heavy infantry of the legions held the centre, flanked by other infantry and cavalry, the latter sometimes interspersed with light infantry or archers (see vol. 1, pp. 404–6). During the imperial period, two basic battle-line organizations were employed. The more traditional one had the legions in the centre, flanked by auxiliaries and with auxiliary cavalry on the wings.²⁴ An alternative to this deployment was for the auxiliaries to take the role usually associated with the legionaries, and for the latter to be deployed only if needed (Tac. *Agr.* 35–6). Though both Tacitus and some modern historians have suggested that this was to preserve the lives of the citizen legionaries, it was contemporary with the arrangement described above in which the legionaries bore the brunt of battle. Auxiliaries tended to be deployed in the front ranks for fighting on ‘difficult’ terrain, probably because their equipment and fighting skills were better suited to it than those of the legionaries.²⁵

Missile troops, usually archers and occasionally slingers, might be stationed on the wings or at the rear of the battle line.²⁶ The positioning of archers at the rear of the battle line was criticized by some military theorists because they had to fire above the heads of the infantry in front of them and so fired with less force and accuracy (Onasander 17), but it allowed them to continue firing even after the opposing battle lines had moved to close combat, which could be particularly effective if the army had deployed on rising ground, providing greater range. This may be a development of the imperial period (the arrangement is illustrated on Trajan’s column scene 70 as well as in written narratives) when there appears to be greater emphasis on the use of missile troops throughout battle. Catapults added to the army’s fire-power and would have had a psychological impact as well as a physical one (fig. 4.1). Bolt-shooting *scorpiones* were quite mobile and could be carried into position or mounted on carts, as illustrated on Trajan’s column. The much larger stone-throwing *ballista* was primarily a siege engine, but they were occasionally deployed in pitched battle, to considerable effect (Tac. *Hist.* 3.23).

The organization and arrangement of legions and cohorts within the battle line is a topic on which there is scarce and contradictory information, and considerable modern bibliography.²⁷ The ‘classic’ organization of the cohortal legion for battle is the *triplex acies* in which each legion’s cohorts were deployed in a 4–3–3 formation, echoing the three lines of the manipular legion. This is the battle line Caesar regularly used throughout the Gallic and civil wars. As with the manipular legion the rear lines of cohorts automatically served as reserves which could turn to fight a new

²⁴ E.g. Tac. *Ann.* 13.34; Arr. *Acies contra Alanos* 12–21.

²⁵ Gilliver (1996a); Rainbird (1969).

²⁶ Caes. *B Civ.* 3.88; Arr. *Acies contra Alanos* 18; Dio Cass. 75.7.

²⁷ See Goldsworthy (1996) 171–3; Bell (1965); Speidel (1992b).

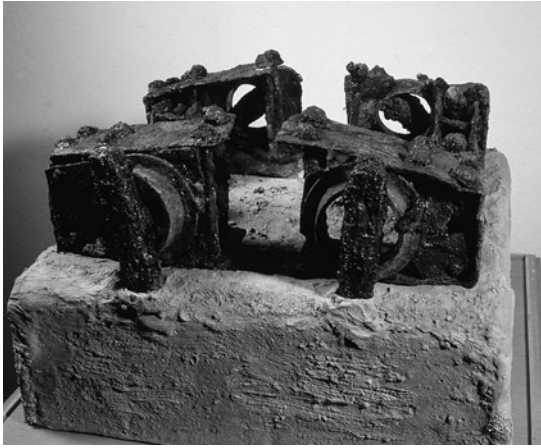


Figure 4.1 Parts of a small catapult from Ampurias in Spain. Various sizes of bolt- and stone-throwers were an important part of the Roman army's arsenal, especially in the attack or defence of fortifications.

threat from the rear, as happened against the Helvetii in 58 BC, or could be used to strengthen the battle line, execute outflanking manoeuvres or be sent to ambush the enemy.²⁸ At Chaeronea in 86 BC Sulla kept five cohorts to the rear of his battle line as a reserve force, which at the moment of greatest pressure he divided, sending the majority to prevent the Roman left being outflanked and taking a smaller force himself to the right wing where he helped to rout the Pontic left (Plut. *Vit. Sull.* 17–19).

While the rear line of cohorts acted as the reserve, the role of the second line in the *triplex acies* is less clear. Caesar's account of Pharsalus (*B Civ.* 3.89–94) appears to indicate that the first two lines of cohorts acted together, though most battle narratives unfortunately lack the detail to confirm whether this was the norm. Caesar himself fails to make clear whether the cohorts from the first two lines united to form one single front or if the second supported the front line of cohorts in the way that the *principes* did the *hastati* in the manipular legion. There is certainly no clear evidence to suggest that cohorts deployed on the battlefield in a *quincunx* or chequerboard formation with the second line covering the gaps between the first.²⁹ This may have been possible with the much smaller maniples (see vol. 1, pp. 428–9), but while moderate gaps between units were necessary to allow ranks to advance and manoeuvre without bumping into each other, it is unlikely that legions in the late Republic went into battle with gaps the

²⁸ Caes. *B Gall.* 1.26; *B Civ.* 3.89. ²⁹ Schenk (1930).

width of a cohort in the front line. It is clear from the literary evidence that rear lines were still able to replace the front-rank fighters once the latter had become weary, as had happened in the manipular legion. Caesar's third line did this at Pharsalus, and the fresh troops maintained the impetus.

When we have details for battle lines of the imperial period (which are admittedly scarce), there is no sign of the *triplex acies*. Instead, legions appear to be deployed in a single line with a depth of up to eight men.³⁰ At most, that is two cohorts, each four deep (and it may indeed have been a single line of cohorts, each eight deep), but all the cohorts were an integral part of the battle line and not held back as a reserve, a development that may have been possible because Rome was facing fewer enemies in pitched battle whose infantry could pose a serious threat. Such shallow formations are indicative of high morale, good training and discipline, and they allowed a higher proportion of the infantry to engage in combat simultaneously, a desirable situation for any army reliant on swordsmen.³¹ Equally problematic is the positioning of individual infantrymen within the battle line, for there is no information on this in either histories or manuals. We may speculate and suggest that within their centuries infantrymen may have been able to place themselves where they wished, so that the bravest, those seeking recognition and promotion, may have fought in the front ranks.³²

2. *Combat mechanics*

Battles frequently began with a cavalry skirmish as each side attempted to neutralize the opposing cavalry; the superior cavalry force provided the option of flank attacks which could prove devastating against light infantry, particularly missile troops who wore virtually no armour and could be cut to pieces.³³ As the lines of battle moved in to engage each other they might be accompanied by missile troops, and here we can see the effectiveness of positioning the archers at the rear of the battle line. The purpose of these missiles, and indeed of the *pila* of the legionaries, was to break up the opposing battle line so that it lacked physical integrity and was therefore more vulnerable when hand-to-hand combat began. The large *scuta* of the legionaries (fig. 4.2) could provide an effective defence against missiles, and soldiers could hold their *scuta* in front of them and above their heads when advancing into battle against a missile barrage. Dio reports that the Severan soldiers did this at the civil war battle of Issus in AD 194, and he describes it as a *testudo*, though clearly it was not the same compact formation used in siege warfare or when facing highly mobile mounted

³⁰ Arr. *Acies contra Alanos* 15–17; but see Goldsworthy (1996) 176–83 for alternatives.

³¹ Goldsworthy (1996) 176–7.

³² On the role of the *antesignani* or 'front-rank fighters', see Caes. *B Civ.* 1.57, 3.75, 84.

³³ Caes. *B Civ.* 3.93; Dio Cass. 75.7.



Figure 4.2 A second-century AD shield boss of tinned brass found in the River Tyne, belonging to Junius Dubitatus of *legio VIII Augusta*. The decoration shows Mars, the four seasons and the legion's standards and bull emblem. The boss protected the hand grip of the shield, and could be used offensively during close combat.

archers such as the Parthians.³⁴ The Severan legionaries gained protection from the missile barrage, but this technique may have caused difficulties in an orderly approach.

The *pila* themselves were thrown on the charge, just before contact with the enemy, and this may have been at fairly close range, for in some battles the legionaries did not have time to throw their *pila* before the enemy were

³⁴ Dio Cass. 40.22, 49.29, 75.7; Frontin. *Str.* 2.3.15; Onasander 20.



Figure 4.3 A sculpture from Mainz of Roman legionaries of the first century AD in fighting pose. The artistic quality is poor compared to other depictions of this era, but the sculpture nicely shows the protection afforded by the helmet and large rectangular shield as the soldier looks for an opening with his sword.

upon them.³⁵ Legionaries then drew their swords and charged into close combat (fig. 4.3), yelling a battle cry intended both to dismay the enemy and encourage themselves (Caes. *B Civ.* 3.92). The shock of the *pilum* volley and din of the charge may have encouraged some enemies to think of flight very quickly, since ‘close quarters fighting and the battle cry fill the enemy with the greatest terror’ (Caes. *B Hisp.* 31). And the legionary was equipped with a sword designed for fighting at very close quarters. Though trained to stab with their swords Roman legionaries also slashed at their opponents, as illustrated in reliefs from Adamklissi in Romania, and probably targeted

³⁵ Caes. *B Civ.* 3.93, *B Gall.* 1.52; Tac. *Hist.* 2.42.

the enemy's torso, and sometimes his face.³⁶ During this phase of combat, missiles and *pila* might continue to fall on both sides, causing casualties to those standing behind the front lines as well as the front-rank fighters.³⁷ At Chaeronea in 86 BC the infantry at the rear of the Roman battle line who could not engage in hand-to-hand fighting hurled *pila* and slingshot at the densely packed Pontic phalanx. The hail of missiles helped to break the Pontic lines.³⁸

Roman infantry formations were often loose enough to allow for new troops to join the front ranks and for casualties to make their way to the rear. However, there is no sign of the system of whole ranks of men withdrawing and being replaced by a fresh line as Livy (8.8) seems to imply happened with the manipular legion, if indeed that ever happened with anything like the degree of organization that he suggested. Though Vegetius (*Mil.* 3.15) recommends three feet of frontage per infantryman, the density of the formation seems to have varied according to the tactical situation, and possibly the morale of the troops. Roman infantry formations that were deploying on the defensive seem to have used a tighter formation, as did those expecting to face a heavy cavalry charge like Arrian's legionaries in Cappadocia in AD 135, because cavalry will rarely charge a dense formation pricking with spears.³⁹

Some scholars have suggested that this is indicative of a 'phalangic tendency' on the part of Roman legions, and that during the imperial period legions may have regularly deployed as a kind of phalanx.⁴⁰ There is no evidence for this, however, and there is no indication that even the most compact legionary formation fought in a way at all similar to a Greek or Macedonian phalanx. A tight defensive formation, which legions did use, was simply one variation of legionary organization on the battlefield. A formation in which the infantry were spaced closer to each other was less likely to be broken up and reach the vulnerable point at which it turned to flight, especially if facing heavy cavalry as Arrian was doing. Units coming under pressure may have been forced together if an attack was coming from the flank, or may have naturally bunched together for greater security.⁴¹ Confident infantry on the offensive may have adopted a looser formation but one that was more risky if the battle turned against them. Tacitus contrasts the more open formation of the attacking Vitellian legionaries with the closed ranks and solid front presented by the Othonians; the Vitellians were repulsed (*Hist.* 3.18; cf. 2.42). On the other hand Caesar ordered his legionaries, who were in a very defensive formation, to open out their ranks

³⁶ Veg. *Mil.* 1.12; Frontin. *Str.* 4.7.32; Caes. *B Civ.* 3.99; Tac. *Ann.* 2.21, *Agr.* 36; Connolly (1991); Hazell (1981).

³⁷ Zhmodikov (2000); Sabin (2000). ³⁸ Tac. *Hist.* 3.23; Dio Cass. 75.6; Plut. *Vit. Sull.* 18.

³⁹ Bosworth (1977). ⁴⁰ Wheeler (1979).

⁴¹ E.g. Tac. *Ann.* 13.40.

in order to launch a counterattack against the Nervii (*B Gall.* 2.25). This looser formation was also used to allow infantry in the front ranks of the battle line to retreat through the ranks, and perhaps this is the kind of system to which Livy (8.8) was referring.

What is clear is that if the integrity of the front ranks was broken the line was vulnerable to attack by enemy infantry and particularly by cavalry. It was the Numidian cavalry tactics that destroyed the Caesarian army under Curio's command in Africa in 49 BC: the Numidians broke up the Roman infantry by pretended retreats, and the scattered groups of legionaries were cut down by the swiftly moving cavalry. Curio's own cavalry were too few and too tired after a forced march to have any effect (Caes. *B Civ.* 2.41). It was when the ranks had been broken up that retreat and flight were most likely. Enemy battle lines were broken up through feint attacks, missiles and battlefield obstacles, attacks in the flank and rear, and through face-to-face combat and fear.⁴² Ordered retreat was possible for disciplined troops, and they might be pushed into renewing the fight, even successfully, by strong leadership.⁴³ But retreat could swiftly turn into flight, and panic and wholesale flight rather than withdrawal in formation were more likely for both Roman and non-Roman troops.⁴⁴ Enemies were encouraged to flee in great panic, since then they were less likely to want to regroup and more casualties could be inflicted. Cavalry (especially mounted archers) and light infantry therefore played a central role in pursuit.

The *hippica gymnasia* that Arrian describes give a good impression of the role of light cavalry in engagements, including pitched battle, for although these elaborate exercises were put on for display, they were based on the manoeuvres of the battlefield.⁴⁵ The cavalry practised using javelins and spears, hurled stones, fired arrows, shot slings and even hand-held catapults from horseback. All were weapons designed to disrupt a body of enemy troops, whether infantry or cavalry. The use of these weapons was practised in formation manoeuvres involving shooting or throwing the missiles, then wheeling away from the enemy lines, the formations intended to reduce the likelihood of the attacking cavalry being put to flight themselves. Feint attacks were also practised, designed to draw the enemy out from their own formation and break it up, making infantry particularly vulnerable to renewed charges by the cavalry. They also practised forming a cavalry version of the infantry's *testudo* formation of locked shields to protect themselves against missile attacks. Towards the end of the display they simulated charging after a fleeing enemy with spears, then 'drawing swords, they hack with them all around, as if lunging after an enemy in flight or cutting down one who has fallen' (Arr. *Tact.* 42).

⁴² Tac. *Hist.* 3.18; Caes. *B. Civ.* 1.44. ⁴³ Caes. *B. Alex.* 40; Tac. *Hist.* 3.16–17; Dio Cass. 75.6.

⁴⁴ Caes. *B. Civ.* 3.94; Tac. *Ann.* 2.17; *Agr.* 37; Dio Cass. 75.7. ⁴⁵ Dixon and Southern (1992).

The great mobility of cavalry made them extremely valuable in all forms of combat, as long as they were reliable. Cavalry of low morale were a liability, mainly because of the very speed with which they could move. Flight was comparatively easy for horsemen and their mobility meant that they were unlikely to be completely destroyed as infantry could be; it was, however, correspondingly easier for them to regroup and re-enter combat if they had the moral strength. Pompey's cavalry at Pharsalus, which was not highly skilled, was by its numerical superiority able to dislodge Caesar's cavalry from their position, leaving the way open to outflank and attack the right wing, but they were themselves comprehensively routed by Caesar's infantry.⁴⁶ The mostly Gallic cavalry in Caesar's army that was attacked by the Nervii were driven off twice, but returned to the battle towards the end to join in the slaughter (*B Gall.* 2.19–27). As indicated above one of the principal roles of cavalry in pitched battle was to outflank the enemy and disrupt the ranks on one wing, or to attack in the rear where troops could more easily turn to flee. Here their role as highly mobile missile troops was a great advantage, but most Roman cavalry, perhaps excluding horse archers, could also act as shock cavalry if necessary, charging infantry and other formations of cavalry. As with infantry tactics there was often a preference for close-quarters fighting, which could have had a devastating impact on enemy morale (see vol. 1, pp. 422–5).⁴⁷

Roman infantry could sometimes experience difficulties facing cavalry, especially the light, highly mobile cavalry encountered in north Africa and the east. After the destruction of Curio's army by Numidian cavalry, Caesar's campaign in the same province was dogged by the same enemy (*Caes. B Afr.* 15). Various expeditions to Parthia in the late Republic found it impossible to cope with the harrying tactics of the large numbers of mounted archers – Antony was humiliated and Crassus had his seven-legion army wiped out without the need for the close infantry combat in which the Romans would undoubtedly have had the upper hand.⁴⁸ As with other tactical problems they faced, though, with good leadership and proper training Roman infantry could defend themselves properly against such attacks, though the mobility of these cavalry units meant that they were extremely resilient.

Against infantry the speed and terrifying noise of a cavalry charge could in itself be all that was necessary to make them turn and flee rather than form a dense formation with spears or *pila* extended to break the charge, a manoeuvre which could then be turned to the offensive once the cavalry had come to a stop (*Dio Cass.* 72.12). The heavily armed cataphracts or *clibanarii* that were introduced into Roman armies during the period were

⁴⁶ *Caes. B Civ.* 3.93; *Frontin. Str.* 4.7.32.

⁴⁷ McCall (2002) 55–77; Hyland (1990), (1993).

⁴⁸ *Dio Cass.* 40.22, 49.29.

exclusively shock cavalry, but their effectiveness could be dependent on the weather.⁴⁹ If it was hot both horses and riders could fade quickly, while if it was wet or icy underfoot they could have difficulty keeping their footing.⁵⁰ If a battle line did break in the face of cavalry the speed and height of the cavalryman gave him an ideal platform from which to cut down fleeing infantry in the way that Arrian describes. The only defence was for a group of infantry to make a stand together and form the dense group that could repel cavalry (Caes. *B Gall.* 6.40), but few soldiers were likely to have been able to control their natural desire to flee in such a situation.

3. *Command*

The role of the general in battle has been studied in considerable detail and shown to have been far more active, influential and skilful than had previously been supposed.⁵¹ Roman battle tactics were not simple enough to be 'point and shoot'. They were too complicated for a commander to line up his troops and simply expect them to get on with it without further intervention, and issues of morale within battle frequently required the general's presence among the deployed troops. The commander addressed the personal needs of his troops before battle through taking the auspices and making a speech, sometimes visiting troops the night before to ascertain the strength of their morale and to encourage them by his presence (Tac. *Ann.* 2.12–13). During the battle he had to gauge the movement of troops across the battlefield and the commitment of reserves, a skill that required careful timing in the heat and confusion of combat (Caes. *B Hisp.* 31).

Commanders were advised to lead from the rear rather than risk death by fighting with their troops.⁵² But they did fight and command from the *mêlée*, throughout the period, and they tended to be particularly prominent in the fighting in civil wars, and when the rewards of military success and the possession of loyal soldiers were especially valuable for political advancement.⁵³ Agricola at Mons Graupius and Arrian against the Alans exemplify the 'textbook' general of the Roman empire, both directing the action from the rear. Though probably visible to their men, and able to control the engagement of reserves, they did not really need to set an example of courage and leadership from the front, for neither battle was likely to be anything but a Roman success; Agricola's gesture of sending his horse away seems rather empty in this context (Tac. *Agr.* 35).

Sulla's behaviour at Orchomenus in 86 BC is typical of the 'hands-on', proactive Roman general, abandoning his horse, grabbing a standard and taking his place with the front-rank infantry to shame his men into making a

⁴⁹ Eadie (1967). ⁵⁰ Tac. *Hist.* 1.79, but cf. Dio Cass. 72.12.

⁵¹ Goldsworthy (1996) 116–70; Kagan (2006). ⁵² Onasander 33; Tac. *Hist.* 3.20.

⁵³ Caes. *B Civ.* 3.59; App. *B Civ.* 3.69, 71; Dio Cass. 75.7.

stand and renewing the fight.⁵⁴ Though potentially risky such actions could have a decisive effect on morale and army loyalty. A compromise between remaining at the rear of battle and leading from the front was to command from just behind the front ranks.⁵⁵ At the second battle of Cremona in AD 69 the commander of the Flavian forces, Antonius Primus, led his men in this fashion. While avoiding the gesture of joining the front ranks with a sword in hand, he moved along the lines, maintaining some idea of events in a large-scale and complex battle, sending in reserves when necessary, and addressing troops at different points of the battle to boost morale (Tac. *Hist.* 3.20–4). This could make full understanding of the tactical situation harder, something that could be compounded by poor visibility caused by dust or if the action took place at night. The dust thrown up at Philippi meant that Cassius was unable to see that Brutus' forces had been successful, which probably contributed to his precipitous suicide.⁵⁶

Arrian gives us a good example of command in battle at the senior level; while he took overall control, the legate of *legio* XV commanded the whole of the right wing, including the cavalry, and the tribunes of *legio* XII (who presumably held joint command of that legion), had responsibility for the left wing. The prefect of an auxiliary cohort commanded the artillery and missile troops stationed on the hill at the right of the battle line, and he had two subordinate officers appointed to assist him. These officers would be expected to respond to developments and emergencies in their area of the battlefield and to note acts of conspicuous courage by soldiers under their command (cf. Caes. *B Gall.* 1.52). Commanders of auxiliary units and centurions and decurions in cavalry units completed the chain to the century or *turma*. Orders from the commander could be disseminated by messengers, and relayed to units by standards or musical instruments, but it was the standards that were most important in forming troops up and moving them around the battlefield (Tac. *Hist.* 3.16).

Infantry and cavalry looked to their standards and eagles in battle and followed them, which could cause difficulties if standards became bunched together or were captured by the enemy.⁵⁷ Standard and eagle bearers would be expected to show bravery and initiative in battle, to lead and encourage their men, as would of course the centurions.⁵⁸ Promoted because of bravery (or social status), centurions were expected to, and did, lead from the front, and not surprisingly they and standard bearers suffered disproportionately high casualty rates even in victory, and could take the blame when things went wrong.⁵⁹ Units in battle benefited from effective leadership at a junior level, but individual soldiers also showed initiative and courage,

⁵⁴ Plut. *Vit. Sull.* 21; Frontin. *Str.* 2.8.12. ⁵⁵ Goldsworthy (1996) 156–63.

⁵⁶ App. *B Civ.* 4.112–13; cf. Plut. *Vit. Mar.* 26. ⁵⁷ Caes. *B Gall.* 2.25; Tac. *Hist.* 3.22.

⁵⁸ Caes. *B Gall.* 4.25; *B Civ.* 3.91.

⁵⁹ Caes. *B Gall.* 2.25, 7.47–50; *B Civ.* 3.64, 3.74, 3.99; Tac. *Hist.* 3.22.

encouraged to do so by a system that valued and rewarded individual as well as communal bravery (Tac. *Hist.* 3.23; see pp. 39–41, 63–6 above).

4. *The aftermath of battle*

The purpose of the line of battle was to force the enemy to turn and flee in panic; this was when the majority of casualties occurred, as those in flight turned their backs to escape and their ranks lost their integrity, allowing pursuing infantry and cavalry to kill almost at will. For Roman troops on the defensive this should have been the point at which, if they were able, they made for their camp or a nearby defended city, or retreated to high ground in a close formation.⁶⁰ In civil war pursuit might turn into assault on a fortification, the pursuers-turned-attackers encouraged not just by their recent victory in battle but by the possibility of plunder from the capture and sack of a city (Tac. *Hist.* 3.26–33). Roman armies rarely completely enveloped opposing armies, since military theory believed that a surrounded army was more likely to resist.⁶¹ The flight of ‘barbarian’ armies could be obstructed by their own ‘grandstands’ of wagons located, according to historical narratives, so that non-combatants could watch the anticipated victory, but there were sound military reasons for this practice (Tac. *Ann.* 14.34–6). It was believed that warriors would fight harder if their families were watching them, especially since the barrier of wagons would both hinder their flight and expose their families to slaughter in the event of defeat (Caes. *B Gall.* 1.51). If flight were not impeded, it would normally be continued for as long as possible, until natural obstacles or nightfall made further pursuit impossible.⁶²

Cavalry was vital for successful pursuit and slaughter of the enemy, and with their height and speed they added to the panic, making rallying less likely. Caesar felt the absence of cavalry most keenly during his first expedition to Britain. Although his infantry were twice able to beat the Britons in battle, he was unable to turn these advantages into proper victories because he did not have the cavalry to inflict the slaughter indicative of success in a major encounter (Caes. *B Gall.* 4.26, 35). Light infantry also joined the pursuit, with missile troops being particularly valuable for adding to the panic and shooting those trying to escape up trees or across rivers (Tac. *Ann.* 2.17–18). Pursuing troops of necessity broke formation in the chase and could become separated from each other, placing them at risk if the defeated were able to counterattack (Tac. *Hist.* 3.25).

⁶⁰ Caes. *B Afr.* 85; Caes. *B Hisp.* 31; *B Alex.* 40.

⁶¹ Onasander 32; Frontin. *Str.* 4.7.16; Veg. *Mil.* 3.21.

⁶² Caes. *B Gall.* 1.53; Tac. *Ann.* 2.17; *Agr.* 37.

Concerns about over-extending forces in the pursuit after battle, or in the slaughter following the capture of a fortification, are clear; commanders were reluctant to allow their forces to enter a city in the dark, preferring instead to wait until daylight (Joseph. *BJ* 7.402). Caesar (*B Gall.* 2.33) candidly admits that he pulled his men out of the *oppidum* of the Aduatuci on the first night of occupation to protect the inhabitants from them, but with the town not fully secured, he was also concerned about the safety of his own men (and rightly so, since the Aduatuci took advantage of the darkness to launch a counterattack). Even if unsuccessful a counter like this could cost unnecessary lives, especially in an unfamiliar urban environment. Counterattack was clearly something Arrian was afraid of when he planned his pursuit of the Alan heavy cavalry; when the infantry had repulsed the Alans, they were to open out their ranks to allow the cavalry through. Half the cavalry would then pursue the Alans while the remainder followed in ranks to attack in case the Alans began turning to renew the battle, or to take over the pursuit if the Alans were pressed into full rout. Meanwhile the light infantry, archers and javelin men would join the pursuit, and the legions would advance, maintaining formation so that if the pursuing cavalry met stiff resistance they could retreat behind the heavy infantry, who would be ready to resist the cavalry charge again (*Expeditio contra Alanos* 27–9).

The size of the victory could be gauged by the comparative casualty figures of the two armies. These were usually very one-sided, whether Romans were beating foreign enemies, being beaten by them or fighting each other. The sizes of opposing armies and casualty figures in historical accounts are notoriously unreliable, and a source of controversy among ancient writers as well as modern.⁶³ Suetonius Paulinus' army supposedly killed 80,000 Britons in Boudicca's army, with 400 Roman losses, a ratio of 200:1; at Mons Graupius it was a more believable figure of 28:1.⁶⁴ Caesar claims a ratio of 75:1 (15,000 to 200) at Pharsalus, but if we believe Asinius Pollio's figure of 6,000 for Pompey's casualties, the ratio is reduced to 30:1; none the less this is still indicative of an overwhelming victory.⁶⁵ Our sources suggest that slaughter and destruction was greater in civil war because the opportunities for enrichment (at least from the sale of prisoners) were restricted, but the casualty figures do not seem to bear this out; this may be because it was easier for defeated troops in civil war to surrender to fellow Romans.⁶⁶ The numbers of standards captured could provide an immediate indication of the size of the victory well before any rough estimate of body count. Sulpicius Galba reports two eagles and sixty standards captured from Antony's

⁶³ Cf. App. *B Civ.* 2.82; Caes. *B Civ.* 3.99; Livy 26.49, 36.19; Delbrück (1975) 33–52; Sabin (2007).

⁶⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 14.37, *Agr.* 37. ⁶⁵ Caes. *B Civ.* 3.99; App. *B Civ.* 2.81.

⁶⁶ Caes. *B Civ.* 3.97–8; Tac. *Hist.* 2.45.

army at Forum Gallorum, in a letter written immediately after the battle when he cannot have had any idea of the casualty figures.⁶⁷

During engagements medical staff were active at the rear of the lines, assessing injuries as they were brought in, and in the aftermath troops not engaged in the pursuit may have checked the battlefield for survivors, and quite possibly finished off the enemy wounded.⁶⁸ A campaign frequently halted for several days after a major engagement to allow the wounded to be treated and to give the army time to rest and recover (Caes. *B Gall.* 1.26). Onasander recommends this as a time for the general to decorate and promote soldiers who showed outstanding valour, to punish the cowards and to allow the troops to plunder the camp and baggage train of the enemy (or the town if it had been a siege, though this might be denied if the place had surrendered).⁶⁹ Our sources rarely mention the despoiling of the enemy dead, but it must have happened, carried out by soldiers, military servants and camp followers. Nor do they give much prominence to the award of decorations to the soldiers, something that was clearly of fundamental importance to the recipients themselves given their prominent display in the epigraphy and accompanying sculpture of the Roman army.⁷⁰ Punishments inflicted on those who had shown cowardice or given way in battle are given greater prominence in the literature, which may hint at a contemporary view of the source of Roman military success.⁷¹ The treatment of prisoners depended, as Onasander recommended (35, 38), on the broader strategic aims of the campaign. Large-scale wars of conquest might lead to the taking of many prisoners to be sold by the commander for profit, or in the case of the Helvetii, sent to reoccupy their homelands which Caesar did not want settled by Germans.⁷² In smaller wars, however, prisoners might be an encumbrance for a force that needed to move swiftly, so surrender might be refused or few prisoners taken (Tac. *Ann.* 4.25, 12.17).

Roman dead were usually buried in a funeral mound on or near the battlefield, a task that would normally have been done swiftly.⁷³ Unfortunately, none of these mounds has ever been identified. Victorious generals also erected trophies of enemy weapons to commemorate the victory and dedicate it to the gods, or more permanent trophy monuments might be erected to publicize permanent conquests, such as the series of trophies Pompey constructed in the Pyrenees and the Augustan trophy at La Turbie above Monaco.⁷⁴ The physical relationship between funeral mound, battlefield trophy and permanent structure is unclear; at Adamklissi, an

⁶⁷ Cic. *Fam.* 10.30; cf. Caes. *B Civ.* 3.99; *B Hisp.* 31.

⁶⁸ Dio Cass. 68.14; Trajan's column scene 40; App. *B Civ.* 3.70.

⁶⁹ Onasander 34; Caes. *B Civ.* 3.97; Tac. *Hist.* 3.33. ⁷⁰ Maxfield (1981).

⁷¹ Caes. *B Civ.* 3.74; Tac. *Ann.* 3.20, 13.36; Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.21. ⁷² Caes. *B Gall.* 1.28, 2.33, 3.16.

⁷³ App. *B Civ.* 2.82; Tac. *Ann.* 1.62.

⁷⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 2.22; Trajan's column scene 78; Plin. *HN* 3.18, 136–8.

altar and cenotaph accompanied the trophy, which itself was adorned with metopes illustrating Roman soldiers in action. The complex at Adamklissi commemorated Trajan's Dacian campaigns, but it is not known if the location has any significance. An unusual feature of the Adamklissi cenotaph is the inscription listing the Roman casualties, probably of Trajan's first campaign rather than those lost under Domitian, dedicated 'in memory of the bravest men who died in the service of the state' (*ILS* 9102). There is no indication that the casualty lists of campaigns were regularly posted in Rome or elsewhere, and at least one suggestion of attempts to conceal the extent of losses in battle (App. *B Civ.* 1.43).

III. LOW-INTENSITY WARFARE

Roman historians liked to regard the legion as a unit that was armed and trained specifically for the set-piece battle, and suggested that it could have difficulties in operating as an effective fighting force outside that scenario.⁷⁵ This is not entirely true; legions could and did operate very successfully outside of pitched battle, but the establishment of auxiliary units during the early Empire provided a permanent source of flexibility of arms that the legion did not possess, particularly strength in cavalry. The tactical flexibility offered by the auxiliary units was especially valuable in the smaller-scale wars of the imperial period, and for frontier and internal security.⁷⁶ This applied most of all to the part-mounted *equitatae* units (see pp. 50–5 above). Though they did not fight together in pitched battle it is very likely that the foot soldiers and cavalymen of these cohorts were used to operating as a unit in small-scale fighting and raiding.

As noted above (pp. 93–4) the revolt of Tacfarinas provides a good example of the nature of the fighting in these smaller-scale wars; having served as an auxiliary, Tacfarinas turned his knowledge of Roman military procedure against his former comrades and raised a force, part of which was armed in Roman fashion. After being defeated in pitched battle, he resorted to hit and run tactics, operating in difficult terrain and avoiding contact with large Roman forces, though setting traps for Roman units and making sudden attacks on small, isolated units. He scored a notable success early on against a legionary cohort, which resulted in one of the last recorded instances of decimation, and successfully disrupted the province for four years (Tac. *Ann.* 2.52, 3.20–1).

Roman forces experienced similar warfare in Aquitania during Caesar's campaigns, in the treacherous bogs of northern Germany, in mountainous Thrace and in Britain where Caratacus and the Silures made excellent

⁷⁵ Livy 22.18; Plut. *Vit. Sert.* 12.

⁷⁶ Cheeseman (1914); Holder (1980); Saddington (1975), (1982).

use of the mountains of south and central Wales from which to harass the Romans.⁷⁷ It is with exactly this type of hit and run fighting that Livy claims the legions in Spain had difficulty, and in responding to these threats imperial Rome did indeed make particular use of auxiliary units. When reacting to an uprising in the client state of Thrace, the commander of the nearest Roman forces sent legionaries to raise a siege and the auxiliary cavalry and infantry to deal with other groups of insurgents who were raiding the countryside and recruiting in the mountains (*Tac. Ann.* 3.39).

Roman military thinking appears to agree with the view of the historians that the legions were not the most appropriate troops for some operations, those requiring fast-moving forces or combat in mountainous or other difficult terrain, and that they were more appropriate to siege warfare (including capturing strongholds in mountainous terrain) and pitched battle. In this, Roman understanding was remarkably similar to the military theory of the late nineteenth-century British empire, which saw regular army units that relied on major engagements to achieve success as being at a disadvantage in guerrilla warfare.⁷⁸ The campaign against Tacfarinas does, however, illustrate that some legionaries at least could operate with auxiliaries as highly mobile infantry.

Good intelligence was necessary to deal effectively with this 'guerrilla' warfare; enemy bases had to be identified and attacked while occupied, preferably by the enemy leader as well as his forces.⁷⁹ Armies were either trained to deal with the different type of warfare, or learned through experience, and specialist knowledge of both terrain and local fighting techniques might be obtained through locally levied troops such as the Batavians and Canninefates during Roman raids into Germany.⁸⁰ However, such warfare could be far riskier than pitched battle, in which properly trained and led Roman armies would normally expect to defeat a non-Roman enemy. It was poor intelligence and misinformation that contributed to the Varian disaster in AD 9 when Varus' marching column of three legions was ambushed and caught unprepared on poor ground and wiped out (*Dio Cass.* 56.20).

This kind of warfare was fragmented and often fast moving since, for the enemy, success relied on the ability to strike swiftly and escape before a Roman army could react. To contend with this, armies were frequently split into smaller columns to increase their mobility and to carry out counter-raids with the advantage of surprise. Against Tacfarinas the army was divided first into three divisions and later subdivided into smaller groups commanded by experienced centurions who could be trusted with independent command.⁸¹ The use of smaller fast-moving columns also reduced

⁷⁷ *Caes. B Gall.* 3.23–4; *Tac. Ann.* 1.65, 4.46–9, 12.32, 38–40. ⁷⁸ Callwell (1906).

⁷⁹ Austin and Rankov (1995) 42–54; *Tac. Ann.* 3.21, 4.25.

⁸¹ *Tac. Ann.* 3.74, 4.24; cf. *Ann.* 1.41, 12.27–8.

⁸⁰ *Caes. B Afr.* 71; *Tac. Ann.* 3.74, 4.73.

the logistical problem of operating in desert or other inhospitable terrain with difficult communications, though it did open up the danger of being defeated in detail, which Agricola just managed to avoid in Scotland (Tac. *Agr.* 26).⁸²

Auxiliary units offered the combination of mobility and strength necessary for success, partly because of the cavalry they provided, which could dismount and fight on foot if the terrain demanded (Frontin. *Str.* 2.3.23), but also because the infantry of at least some units seems to have been able to move faster than most legionaries. Light-armed (*levis armatura*) or mobile infantry units (*expeditae cohortes*) were regularly used for the kind of raiding operations being carried out in both Germany and Africa, and these could be accompanied by fast-moving legionaries.⁸³ Precisely how these legionaries were 'fast-moving' (*velocissimi*) compared with ordinary legionaries is uncertain; they and the auxiliaries may just have been travelling without packs and with only essential kit and supplies, which is how Caesar ensured that he had fast-moving infantry to work with his cavalry against Labienus' cavalry threat in Africa (*B Afr.* 75). There is no indication that they were using anything other than usual weapons or armour. A surprise attack by one of these small, highly mobile forces ended the war against Tacfarinas in (Victorian) textbook fashion. Travelling through the night, the Roman cavalry and 'light' infantry caught the Numidians and Tacfarinas in an old fort that had poor defences and no sentries. The Romans attacked at dawn with shouting and trumpet blasts and took the Numidians completely by surprise, wiping them out. Tacfarinas was killed rather than captured because, as Tacitus points out (*Ann.* 4.25), the war would only come to an end with his death.

IV. NAVAL AND AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE

It is ironic that, at the very time Rome established its naval forces on a permanent footing with fixed bases, large-scale naval warfare became obsolete, at least for the next couple of centuries.⁸⁴ Actium and the destruction of the Egyptian fleet led to the reduction of the last remaining kingdom in the Mediterranean with any significant naval forces; the newly created Roman imperial fleets patrolled the seas, dealt with pirates and raiders, provided support for land operations and worked the *velarium* on the Colosseum. The hypothetical army of the military surveyor Ps.-Hyginus does contain marines, but for the purposes of route clearance and road building rather than any maritime role.⁸⁵ None the less, the few fleet actions that occurred in our period illustrate many of the same concerns relating to deployment

⁸² Hanson (1987). ⁸³ Tac. *Ann.* 1.50, 2.8, 3.21, 4.25. ⁸⁴ Starr (1941).

⁸⁵ Ps.-Hyginus, *De munitionibus castrorum* 24; Lenoir (1979).

that we see in land battles. Naval battles were more likely to be influenced by the vagaries of weather and wind than those on land, so there could be some delay before conditions allowed a battle to take place, and there was also a much greater random factor than existed in land battles.⁸⁶ At Actium Antony was greatly outnumbered by Octavian and so risked being outflanked and his ships taken from both front and rear. As with a land-based battle he made use of the terrain, deploying as close inshore as he could, with his wings protected by the shallow waters that Octavian's ships could not enter.⁸⁷

As in land engagements missiles played an important role in Roman naval warfare and the ships were frequently equipped with towers to give slingers, archers and artillery greater range and power. Incendiary missiles, particularly fearful weapons at sea, formed part of the arsenal. A missile barrage was fired before ships closed for close combat, and missiles continued to fire throughout the engagement, though not incendiary devices once the ships were at close quarters (App. *B Civ.* 5.119). Tactics varied depending on the size and manoeuvrability of the ships. As discussed above (pp. 55–8) in this volume, the imperial navy, which was unlikely to face a large-scale naval engagement, consisted mostly of smaller ships appropriate to their duties – triremes and two-banked liburnians. The civil wars at the end of the Republic provided the last encounters that involved the larger quadriremes and quinqueremes that had been developed in the arms race of the Hellenistic era (see vol. 1, pp. 357–61, 434–43); in the naval battles of the 40s BC size and design proved significant.

At Mylae, Sextus Pompey had smaller, more easily manoeuvrable ships manned by more experienced sailors, so he avoided ramming the enemy head on and instead concentrated on disabling Agrippa's ships by breaking off the oars and rudders (which required considerable skill and timing), or isolating them and attacking them from all sides. With his sturdier, taller ships which were probably designed with his intended tactics in mind, Agrippa aimed to ram Sextus Pompeius' ships anywhere and bring the battle to close quarters as soon as possible. Here he had the advantage of size, since his ships could hold more troops, and had the additional height to bring fire to bear on the Pompeian ships. His ships also used a grappling hook to haul the Pompeian ships in to the point where they could be boarded, a device that worked very well both at Mylae and Naulochus (App. *B Civ.* 5.106, 119). At Actium both sides were content to engage at close quarters, boarding ships and capturing them or destroying them, and this was probably not because of inexperienced or incompetent rowers (fig. 4.4). The preferred Roman tactics allowed them to play to their strengths in numbers and heavily armed infantry and were probably

⁸⁶ Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 65; Caesar *B Gall.* 3.14.

⁸⁷ Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 65; cf. App. *B Civ.* 5.107–8.



Figure 4.4 Marble relief from Praeneste depicting a war galley of the late first century BC. The crocodile emblem suggests this formed part of Antony and Cleopatra's fleet at Actium. The troops are obviously over-scale, and the tower illustrates the importance of deck fighting and boarding tactics for these large galleys, rather than the ramming manoeuvres emphasized by the most skilful exponents of trireme tactics.

developed (along with the sturdier ships) for that reason, rather than because the Romans made poor sailors.

As with land battles, once the integrity of the line of battle was broken one side might turn to flight, at which point ships became isolated and more vulnerable to enemy attack. Because naval battles usually took place near to land, fleeing ships might be driven on shore, but pursuing ships had to curb their enthusiasm for the chase or they might end up on shore too (App. *B Civ.* 5.121). The majority of casualties drowned because they could not swim or because they could not get out of swamped ships, but at Mylae Sextus Pompeius' smaller boats rowed round picking swimmers out of the water, and it is possible that such lifeboats were deployed in other naval battles (App. *B Civ.* 5.107).

Command and control in naval warfare was challenging because of the difficulties in seeing what was going on in the midst of battle from the deck of a ship, and also given the problems in communicating. Generals seem to have acted in much the same way as in land battles, commanding from the rear, often on land, or from a flagship in the middle of battle, as both

Antony and Agrippa did at Actium.⁸⁸ Agrippa had smaller auxiliary craft available at Actium to relay orders and information in the same way that cavalry did in engagements on land (Dio Cass. 50.31), and this was most probably a regular feature of naval battles. Sextus Pompeius controlled his fleet at Mylae from a hill and was able to signal them to disengage because he could see, probably more clearly than anyone commanding on the water, that they were being beaten (App. *B Civ.* 5.107).

In the Empire, naval operations tended to be on a much smaller scale and usually, with no other naval powers surviving, part of land-based operations such as supporting Trajan's campaigns across the Danube and into Parthia.⁸⁹ Even when fleets and marines were not available, soldiers still made use of the water when appropriate, and were able to operate effectively, mounting artillery on boats at Cyzicus in the civil war between Severus and Niger to fire at the flanks of the enemy armies that had deployed near the lake in an attempt to secure their wings (Dio Cass. 75.6). On Lake Gennesaret, in response to the Jewish waterborne attack, Roman soldiers ensured that their infantry skills could still be an advantage, building rafts which provided a relatively sturdy fighting platform from which soldiers fired on the Jewish boats and boarded them when they came too close (Joseph. *BJ* 3.505).

Caesar's warships in the Channel played a key role in supporting the transports involved in his first landings, providing covering fire from slingers, archers and artillery, and ultimately driving the Britons back sufficiently for the infantry to start landing (*B Gall.* 4.25). The disadvantage with landing troops from warships was that their keels were too deep to beach properly, and the infantry were less than keen to jump into the deeper water; Caesar had transports with him that had a shallower draught, but was unable to use them under the threat from the Britons. For other waterborne operations armies usually had to construct small craft which were agile and had a shallow draught, able to transport infantry and cavalry and capable of acting as landing craft. They were used extensively in raids in northern Germany and in Suetonius Paulinus' attack on Anglesey in AD 60 (Tac. *Ann.* 2.6, 14.29). These transports were less suitable for working at sea than on rivers, and nervousness on the part of soldiers in the vessels contributed to the huge losses sustained by Germanicus' fleet when it was wrecked on the German coast in autumnal storms (Tac. *Ann.* 2.23–4).

Waterborne operations eased logistical difficulties and enabled troops to be moved swiftly into terrain that would have otherwise been difficult to penetrate, taking the enemy by surprise. Operating in that terrain once there, though, was a particular difficulty for legionary troops who, as we have seen, were not well equipped for operating in wetlands. Such

⁸⁸ Carter (1970). ⁸⁹ Dio Cass. 78.28; Belfiglio (2001).

amphibious operations regularly involved auxiliary units of Batavian infantry and cavalry. They, along with other tribes living in the Rhine delta such as the Cherusci and Canninefates, were skilled at fighting in flooded and marshy terrain, and caused major problems for successive Roman armies operating in northern Germany by meeting them on ground that they had chosen. As usual Rome recruited from the areas in which it was fighting and raised units of both Batavians and Canninefates, though it is the former who get all the glory. Batavians carried the river crossing in Kent that caught the Britons by surprise in AD 43, and were very probably the auxiliaries who crossed the Menai straits to capture Anglesey for Agricola.⁹⁰ They could cross fast-flowing rivers under arms, providing a valuable element of surprise and fear. They provided both cavalry and infantry (who could also fight highly successfully in the front line of pitched battle) and were inordinately proud of their abilities.⁹¹ Their boastful behaviour and eagerness to show off their skills might be suggestive of the behaviour of élite troops, but Rome had no 'special forces' and generals probably made the best use of the particular skills their units possessed.⁹²

V. SIEGE WARFARE

The ability to besiege fortifications and capture them either through blockade or by violent assault was essential to a state that desired to create and maintain an empire, but not every ancient state possessed the advantages that enabled it to conduct successful siege warfare. It was an expensive way to wage war and could be immensely time consuming. Rome had traditionally been a successful besieger and was able to maintain an army over the winter if necessary, even during the relative inactivity of a passive siege when blockade and starvation were the aim. The trained and specialist troops needed particularly for offensive sieges were available, and the logistical support system could provide for an army that was essentially static even after it had consumed all raw materials in the vicinity, including the vast quantities of timber necessary for circumvallation and assault machines.⁹³

All this was aided by the professionalization of the army in the late Republic and the presence in the army of engineers, artillery specialists and soldiers whose training included entrenching and field engineering. Rome could also deploy complex siege machines and artillery, something its enemies outside Parthia rarely saw, and their very arrival on the scene could provoke terror in the hearts of 'barbarian' enemies (Caes. *B Gall.* 2.12). As siege warfare involved all members of a community, terror tactics

⁹⁰ Dio Cass. 40.20; Hassall (1970); Tac. *Agr.* 18.

⁹¹ *CIL* III 3676; Dio Cass. 69.9.

⁹² Tac. *Ann.* 2.8, *Hist.* 2.66. ⁹³ Roth (1999).

could be especially effective. The need for an imperial power to set an example to foreign enemies, and particularly to rebels and potential rebels within its empire, meant that, once begun, a siege was virtually never abandoned until the objective was captured or surrendered. Masada was assaulted and captured after the 'official' end of the Jewish revolt when Vespasian and Titus had held their triumph in Rome. There was little prospect of booty or prisoners from the capture of the stronghold, but its capture served as a symbol not just of Rome's authority but also that of the newly established emperor. Nevertheless, despite Rome's superiority in siege warfare, reputations in war were made by speed, and success in a siege might be tempered if it had been dragged out, so commanders may have been encouraged to attempt risky assaults (Joseph. *BJ* 5.502–7).

Surprise was a valuable asset in siege warfare, as a stronghold or city that had not expected an enemy army was more vulnerable to blockade if it had not stockpiled supplies, or to assault if the walls could not be properly manned. The speed at which Roman armies were able to move could prove significant, especially if they travelled through inhospitable terrain, in a type of warfare in which gaining a psychological advantage over the enemy could be of great significance (Sall. *Iug.* 76). The cities of Thessaly were intimidated into surrender partly by Caesar's treatment of the town of Gomphi, which was comprehensively sacked, but also by the speed with which he then moved on to the neighbouring town of Metropolis, outstripping news of Gomphi's fate (*B Civ.* 3.80–1). Speed in the construction of siege engines and fieldworks could have a similar effect, the defenders at Jerusalem very probably being intimidated (though not sufficiently to surrender) by the rapid construction of 7 kilometres of siege-works in only three days (Joseph. *BJ* 5.491–511).

It was unusual for a Roman army to begin blockading an objective without first having attempted some kind of assault, which could take place swiftly on arrival in an attempt to take advantage of an unprepared enemy and to achieve an immediate and spectacular victory. Sudden assaults could prove extremely successful, with the Armenian city of Volandum being captured by Corbulo in less than a morning (Tac. *Ann.* 13.38), but the danger they involved required discipline and high morale on the part of the besiegers. The success at Avaricum may have encouraged Caesar and his men to over-ambition in attempting to carry Gergovia by assault; the reverse there may in turn have contributed to an entirely passive approach at Alesia with a strategy of starving out the Gauls, though the huge size of the Gallic army trapped in the hill-fort doubtless influenced the decision (*B Gall.* 7.69–74).

The artillery trains with Roman armies gave them a significant advantage, and the covering fire that could be laid down meant that an assault could be effective even without any other specialist siege equipment. Intelligence



Figure 4.5 Scene from Trajan's column depicting Roman troops attacking a Dacian fortification, using the famous *testudo* (tortoise) formation to shield themselves from missiles. Like earlier dominant military powers such as the Assyrians, the Romans needed to be expert in sieges so as to confront opponents who understandably avoided open battles.

was usually gathered to identify the most vulnerable parts of the defences, and several sections were likely to be attacked simultaneously, with terrific shouting and activity, to divide the enemy defenders and cause maximum confusion (fig. 4.5).⁹⁴ If such an assault failed, or if a more cautious approach was demanded, a combination of blockade and assault might be employed. It was unusual for a Roman army to undertake an entirely passive siege like Numantia or Alesia, which would be very expensive in terms of time and resources, and could be considered bad for the besieging army, reflecting Roman military thinking that idleness led to poor morale and discipline (cf. Joseph. *BJ* 5.496).

Camps similar to those used in open campaigns, though usually with more substantial defences, were entrenched very early on in a siege to provide a refuge in case of sortie by the besieged or attack by a relieving force. Metellus did not begin his offensive against Zama in 109 BC until he had built such a camp, which Jugurtha proceeded to attack when the Romans were occupied in an all-out assault on the town, intending to capture it and deny the Romans a chance of refuge before turning on them and catching them in the open (Sall. *Iug.* 56). These camps were established at strategic points, often the more vulnerable areas likely to be attacked, with good lines of sight, and hence equally visible to the besieged (Caes. *B Gall.* 7.69, 80). The camp most likely to be Silva's headquarters at Masada has excellent views of the siege ramp, the main area of operations in the siege, though it is set back from the circumvallation wall for additional protection. Even without a circumvallation wall the presence of several Roman camps would have sent a clear message to the besieged. This was

⁹⁴ E.g.: Sall. *Iug.* 57–9; Caes. *B Gall.* 5.21; Tac. *Ann.* 13.38.

an added bonus when the objective was, usually, to force the enemy to surrender rather than have to capture the place by storm.

As indicated, at Alesia Caesar had the circumvallation dug at once, but the amount of work such an undertaking required meant that this was not always the case. Titus, to whom Josephus was referring when he commented that reputations were won by speed, did not circumvallate Jerusalem until various assaults had failed and he realized that the siege would be a long one. His aim was to deny the defenders communication with the outside world and to attempt to enforce a strict blockade – he seems to have been successful in this respect, if Josephus' tales of food shortages and the inevitable accusations of cannibalism are anything to go by; morale would have been severely damaged, aggravating existing schisms between the defenders. Circumvallation lessened the chance of a successful break-out by the besieged, and provided morale-boosting additional security to the besieging force. Lines of circumvallation are not uncommon in sieges of the imperial period, especially in the eastern empire with its established cities with well-defended stone walls, a very different siege proposition from the hill-forts of the north-western provinces.

Usually circumvallations made best use of the topography to enhance their defensive capabilities, often following contours and making use of steep slopes, though where the land was especially steep at Masada, the wall was dispensed with. Despite Caesar's claims of completeness at Alesia, fieldwork has revealed that there were gaps in his lines too, where defences were unnecessary because the terrain was so difficult. Towers were often built with the dual purpose of providing look-out posts and artillery positions. Caesar claims that at Alesia the towers were at eighty-foot intervals, so they were well within covering fire of each other in case of an attack on any one (*B Gall.* 7.72). At Masada, however, artillery towers were only constructed on the eastern side of the fortress where the slope was less severe, because that was where any attack was most likely to come.⁹⁵ Where topography demanded, a ditch might accompany the earth rampart or stone wall of the circumvallation, but the double ditches of the works at Alesia are unique, perhaps a pointer to Caesar's intention to sit tight within his fortifications and run a passive siege, waiting until starvation forced surrender.

An army scattered among different camps along a line of circumvallation probably experienced difficulties in communication, though this is not something that most of our sources care to mention. Appian (*Hisp.* 92) shows some awareness of this problem and offers a solution in his description of the siege of Numantia in 133 BC, where the raising of a flag sent out the message that a fort was under attack. Although there is no mention of a

⁹⁵ Richmond (1962); Hawkes (1929).

similar system being set up at other sieges, it seems likely to have happened, and towers on circumvallations probably had basic signalling capabilities too. The need to establish communications between forts is likely to have had an impact on their positioning since it would have been necessary to locate them in line of sight of each other if there were no towers to relay signals. A general coordinating an attack must have had messengers with him to convey instructions to other areas of the assault; Caesar implies this when he says that he found a vantage point from which to direct his response to the Gallic attacks on his siege lines at Alesia and send instructions to various parts of the line (*B Gall.* 7.85).

Once a blockade was established attention would usually return to the assault, and it was here that the specialist engineers of the army came into their own. Even if no elaborate siege engines were employed or siege ramps built, catapults needed to be properly positioned and fired by skilled artillerymen to ensure accuracy; the most able could pick off an individual behind a loophole at considerable distance (*Zos.* 1.69–70). Artillery, along with slingers and archers, provided covering fire for attacks or other operations within range of whatever missiles the defenders had available. The stone-throwing *ballistae* could cause damage to walls, but both types of catapult were essentially anti-personnel devices; the bolt-shooting *scorpiones* provided rapid, accurate fire at defenders on the walls while the *ballistae* had a slower rate of fire because of their size, and were probably less accurate, but could project stone missiles over city walls, bringing terror and death to civilians as well as those under arms (*Joseph. BJ* 3.257). Both types could protect the besiegers from counterattacks.⁹⁶ Under this covering fire and with additional protection from mobile shelters the besiegers could approach the walls and attempt to scale them with ladders, undermine them, knock holes in them with battering rams, or if the walls were particularly high or well protected, build a siege ramp to access them and a mobile siege tower with battering ram to breach them.

The use of mines in the imperial period, either to undermine and destroy walls or towers or to burrow a way into a city, seems to have been extremely rare. Caesar's engineers attempted to enter Marseilles this way during the civil wars because they had had no success with other assault methods, but they were thwarted by the standard defence of digging a ditch within the city walls and filling it with water. When the mine was opened up it instantly flooded, killing the sappers (*Vitr. De arch.* 10.16.11–12). There is virtually no further evidence of Roman armies using mines in the context of siege warfare until the fourth century, a rare hint being one of the panels on the early third-century arch of Severus, which may illustrate a mine or

⁹⁶ Marsden (1969).

alternatively an attack on a wall under cover of shelters. While mining was obviously not always appropriate to a siege, its absence is perhaps indicative of the extraordinary success armies had with blockade and heavyweight assault.

The size and complexity of siege-works varied considerably. The siege tower that scared the Aduatuci into surrender was probably rather modest compared with the ninety-foot iron-clad engine that was built at Masada.⁹⁷ With the exceptions of Avaricum and Alesia, armies encountered few hill-forts in the western provinces that proved a serious obstacle. Many were taken swiftly by direct assault, and it is highly unlikely that Vespasian encountered any major difficulties in capturing any of the twenty *oppida* in southern Britain (Suet. *Vesp.* 4). Hod Hill in Dorset may have been forced into surrender by an artillery barrage, or taken by storm under the cover of artillery, and the same may have happened at Maiden Castle.⁹⁸ There are no indications of any siege-works or of serious resistance. As with circumvallation speed was an important factor in building siege engines and constructing the ramps from whatever materials were most easily available, usually turf and timber in the western empire, stone and timber in the east. A siege ramp rapidly approaching a city's walls would have shown that the besieger meant business, and put added pressure on the defenders to surrender before the place was taken by storm. Given the expense of siege warfare, and the logistical difficulties of keeping a large static army supplied, the sooner the siege was over the better.

The besieged were encouraged to surrender by a variety of means – by direct plea (though this might be interpreted as a sign of weakness or lack of resolve), through shows of strength such as parading the army before the city walls, by flaunting supplies of food at those starving within, through terror tactics such as executing captured enemy leaders or simply by the knowledge that the normal conventions of siege warfare rewarded surrender with better treatment than that reserved for a town taken by storm.⁹⁹ Commanders on the whole preferred surrender to the dangers of an assault, but for soldiers that was not necessarily the case, for assault meant sacking the city and opportunities for plunder. Entering a city through a wall-breach or narrow opening such as a gate exposed soldiers to great peril despite the protection offered by covering fire and by their armour and shields. They were open to fire from the flanks and from above, and probably having to make their way through debris, with the constant danger of being cut off from their comrades; once within the walls they lost artillery support, and until the walls and strategic points were in Roman hands there was the constant

⁹⁷ Caes. *B Gall.* 2.31; Joseph. *BJ* 7.307.

⁹⁸ Richmond (1968) 33; Wheeler (1943) 62; Rivet (1971).

⁹⁹ Joseph. *BJ* 5.360, 348–56, 522, 7.202; Caes. *B Civ.* 3.48; Frontin. *Str.* 2.9.3, 5; Gilliver (1996a).

danger of counterattack. Little wonder that incentives were offered to the first man on the walls.¹⁰⁰

The sack of Avaricum was managed with reduced risk because the Romans were able to gain possession of the whole interior of the walls without descending into the town proper. This was possible because the *oppidum* was not particularly large and lacked complex defences. Polybius gives the impression that, after capture by assault, a city was sacked in a kind of organized mayhem, but this is an idealized view.¹⁰¹ Control is conspicuously absent in the vast majority of sacks conducted by Roman soldiers, as they were given free rein to destroy, murder, rape and pillage as a reward for the hardships of the siege. There is no indication of the kind of systematic clearance of buildings that we are familiar with from modern urban warfare. Nor is there any evidence that any of the instruction recruits received included training for siege warfare or fighting in urban areas, and this may have added to the confusion of the sack.

While blockade and assault were intended to inflict appalling suffering and destruction upon communities, siege warfare could expose the ordinary Roman soldier to unusual hardship and stress. Thirst, hunger and even starvation could threaten a blockading army, particularly if supply lines were difficult, and a blockade could become a game of who starved first. At Dyrrachium it was Caesar who had to abandon his blockade of Pompey, while the allegedly well-supplied Paetus surrendered in AD 62 to the Persians who had themselves almost run out of food.¹⁰² Thirst was undoubtedly a problem for the army besieging Masada with its distant supplies of water and desert climate; soldiers attempted to overcome extremes of temperature by constructing dwarf walls around their tents.

If a siege progressed slowly, or was extremely difficult and heavy casualties were taken, morale could become a problem. A splendid parade at which the Roman legionaries besieging Jerusalem were paid, all dressed in their finest equipment, was intended to intimidate the defenders through a display of strength and discipline, but was probably also intended to restore morale after the extremely difficult and costly capture of part of the city, and with the prospect of moving on to take the fortress of Antonia (Joseph. *BJ* 5.353). Morale was such a problem for Severus at Hatra that he was forced to abandon the siege, though he contributed to the problems himself.¹⁰³ Morale was sapped by the hardships of the desert, the effectiveness and range of the defenders' artillery, the burning naphtha thrown down on siege engines and soldiers and raids on foraging parties; the army may have been low in confidence because it had also failed to capture Hatra the previous year. Despite these difficulties Severus' troops broke

¹⁰⁰ Caes. *B Gall.* 7.27; Joseph. *BJ* 6.33.

¹⁰¹ Polyb. 10.15; Ziolkowski (1993).

¹⁰² Caes. *B Civ.* 3.74; Tac. *Ann.* 15.15.

¹⁰³ Campbell (1986); Kennedy (1986).

down part of the walls, only to be recalled by their emperor who hoped Hatra would surrender, an action that would have denied the soldiers the opportunity to enrich themselves through plunder and take revenge on the Atreni for their sufferings during the siege. The unaccommodating Atreni not only refused to surrender but rebuilt the wall, and the Roman troops mutinied when ordered to attack it again, ending the siege (Dio Cass. 76.11–12).

Scaling walls and storming breaches was exceptionally dangerous, and the men who undertook these tasks may have been a self-selecting group of the bravest, or generals may have called for volunteers (Sall. *Iug.* 57, 93). The number of men at the front of an assault on a breach was of necessity very small, and those seeking military decorations, rewards of money or promotion may have been encouraged to volunteer. Titus seems to have identified a group of the bravest legionaries and auxiliaries in the army from whom he then pressured men into volunteering for an absurdly dangerous attack on a secondary wall built to cover a breach in the outer wall at Jerusalem (Joseph. *BJ* 6.36). The high visibility of Titus at Jerusalem owes much to Josephus' desire to portray a heroic leader, but the difficulties of the siege may have demanded a much closer relationship than usual between general and ordinary soldiers, and this may have been the case in other sieges too.

Speed was not the only means of surprising the enemy, and Frontinus' *Stratagems* (3.1–11) are full of examples of cities captured by deception, feigned retirements, drawing out the besieged and surprising them in the open, and attacks from unexpected quarters, all stratagems which reduced the length and dangers of a siege. Surprise attacks were frequently opportunistic, and suggestive of a high degree of initiative on the part of ordinary soldiers, such as the snail-seeking Ligurian auxiliary who discovered a way up into Jugurtha's mountain citadel near the Muluccha (Sall. *Iug.* 94). More surprising are the actions of legionaries and auxiliaries in capturing the fortress of Antonia at Jerusalem, not because of their initiative and the ingenuity of their plan (killing the guards, sneaking into the fortress under cover of darkness and then sounding the trumpet to alert Titus), but because they carried it out without first having consulted any officers, let alone the commander (Joseph. *BJ* 6.68–70).

This section, like most military handbooks of the imperial period, has concentrated on Roman armies attacking fortifications rather than defending them. Regular troops rarely found themselves besieged by large enemy forces in the period under study, partly because of a strategy of meeting the enemy in open warfare and pitched battle where they usually had a significant advantage. Forces with good morale were normally able to hold off enemy assaults, even with the defences of a winter camp rather than city walls, though weak morale and leadership might lead to ignominious

surrender to the enemy.¹⁰⁴ Large-scale sieges in civil war in which Roman armies were both attacking and defending almost invariably ended in negotiated surrender of the besieged rather than assault and sack, as soldiers and their commanders seem to have made an effort to avoid slaughtering their fellow soldiers.¹⁰⁵ Non-Roman forces lacked the equipment and siege techniques necessary for success, particularly against Roman defenders, and while the Parthians had the equipment, Tacitus suggests that they lacked the courage in hand-to-hand combat to prosecute a siege, a comment that would appear to confirm the particular courage required in siege warfare.¹⁰⁶

VI. THE SECRET OF ROMAN SUCCESS

Roman military thinking believed that a pitched battle fought on a fair or level battlefield would bring a certain victory. Throughout the period Rome dominated not just in the pitched battle but in other types of engagement too, or it made them obsolete. The tactical manuals provide some insight into how the Romans themselves explained their military success. 'The Roman people conquered the whole world with its military drill, camp discipline, and military skill' claims Vegetius, writing at a time when, in his belief, the absence of these factors had contributed to Rome's military decline. He goes on to say that a small well-trained army is always likely to win whereas an inexperienced and undisciplined horde will be slaughtered.¹⁰⁷ The move towards a standing army in the late Republic made it more likely that troops would be better trained, and Rome could rely more on the drill and discipline Vegetius admired rather than manpower, though the comparatively small permanent armies of the Principate never had to face a Hannibal or a Mithridates (see vol. 1, pp. 429–33).

A standing army contained experienced soldiers and could afford to keep them well trained; trained veterans could withstand both the physical and moral shock of combat far better than new recruits.¹⁰⁸ They could react quickly to a developing situation in combat and respond without the need for orders from their officers and they could also use their initiative.¹⁰⁹ At Pharsalus Caesar's veterans checked their charge and halted to regain their breath when they realized that Pompey's troops were stationary, so that they would not meet the enemy breathless. Caesar (*B Civ.* 3.93) puts this down to their training and experience from previous battles. In Africa he trained his legionaries to cope better with the hit and run fighting they were facing,

¹⁰⁴ Caes. *B Gall.* 5.39–52; Tac. *Ann.* 15.5, 14; *Hist.* 4.60; Trajan's column scene 78.

¹⁰⁵ Caes. *B Civ.* 1.22–3; App. *B Civ.* 5.39–49; but cf. Tac. *Hist.* 3.33; Dio Cass. 75.12.

¹⁰⁶ Tac. *Hist.* 4.23, 29–30; *Ann.* 15.5. ¹⁰⁷ Veg. *Mil.* 1.1; cf. Onasander 6, 10.

¹⁰⁸ App. *B Civ.* 3.67–9; Sall. *Jug.* 86.

¹⁰⁹ Caes. *B Gall.* 2.20; Tac. *Hist.* 2.23; Joseph. *BJ* 6.68–70.

and acquired some elephants so the men and horses could become more familiar with them and learn how to fight and counter them (*B Afr.* 71–2).

Training and discipline, however, were by no means everything; effective leadership and control on the battlefield played its part too, from generals playing an active role in the direction of battles and the fighting of them when necessary, down to centurions and standard bearers. Until the early Principate, and even afterwards when social status could bring such appointments, centurions were promoted because of their leadership skills and courage, and the high casualty rates they incurred are indicative of the vital role they played in combat. With good officers morale in a professional army on campaign was likely to be high, and fellow soldiers would know each other well, increasing their effectiveness in fighting together and for each other. Commanders made the most of the specialist skills their troops possessed. Part-mounted auxiliary cohorts brought considerable tactical flexibility, as did units like the Batavians, while the continued use of allied troops recruited locally for a single campaign provided specialist knowledge of the enemy and topography. This was not a homogeneous army in which all legions and auxiliary units were armed and equipped identically, or fought in the same way. Units were trained and equipped to deal with the opponents and type of warfare that they were likely to meet in their part of the empire; if they moved to another theatre, they might have to be retrained to cope with the different style of warfare.

Manuals do not boast of Rome's technological superiority, for it probably contributed less to its military success than other factors. Indeed the literary *topos* relating to equipment is of Rome being willing to adopt the weapons and successful techniques of its enemies and adapting them to its own needs.¹¹⁰ Few of the enemies Rome encountered in this period had artillery pieces, and most of those who did had plundered them from Roman armies anyway, but outside of the siege, artillery rarely played a decisive role in engagements. The equipment available for siege warfare was highly effective, but no better than that of the neighbouring Parthians. It was the existence of a standing army, training and logistical organization that allowed Rome to use this equipment so successfully.

The final ingredient of Rome's success lay in the weaknesses of its enemies. During this period Rome rarely had to face an enemy with anything like its own military organization and strength. Most of its enemies were unable to maintain an army in the field for any length of time – they might have difficulty in mustering a force in the first place, or would be compelled either to seek a swift victory under unfavourable circumstances or to dissipate.¹¹¹ When they were able to fight to their strengths, using hit and run tactics on difficult terrain, ambushing vulnerable marching columns

¹¹⁰ Diod. Sic. 23.2; Arr. *Tact.* 4.1; *Suda* 303.1.

¹¹¹ Caes. *B Gall.* 2.10; Goldsworthy (1996) 45–7.

and avoiding pitched battle, they could be devastatingly successful. But with Rome usually on the offensive this could be difficult to engineer. The Romans were confident that their armies would continue to be successful. Appian, writing in the 'golden age' of the mid-second century AD, saw trained veteran legionaries as almost invincible in battle against raw recruits or 'barbarians', the latter a concept constantly illustrated in the iconography of Rome.

CHAPTER 5

WARFARE AND THE STATE

A. MILITARY FINANCE AND SUPPLY

Dominic Rathbone

The extant literature of the Roman world of the late Republic and Principate has only occasional brief references to soldiers' pay, preparations for particular campaigns and the burden of military expenses. No coherent discussion survives of the financing of the Roman army, let alone of the economics of Roman war. The province of Egypt furnishes a broad but random sample of records on papyrus and ostraca from the first to third centuries AD (and beyond), mostly about supplies, which is supplemented by sparse documents elsewhere, notably the tablets from Vindolanda (Britain) and Vindonissa (Upper Germany), the Bu Njem ostraca (Africa) and Dura-Europus papyri (Mesopotamia). Soldiers' dedicatory and funerary inscriptions, of which the richest concentration is from Lambaesis (Africa), occasionally help, and other archaeological finds in and around military camps, mainly in the north-western provinces, represent further potential data on the military economy.¹

I. THE REMUNERATION OF SOLDIERS

In the long first century BC, as part of the revolution from Republic to Principate, the Roman army was transformed from an annual peasant levy to a standing professional force (see pp. 30–7 above), although formal recognition of changes often lagged behind them. The Republican ideology that legionary service was restricted to property-owners who could arm and maintain themselves lived on into the second century AD, although landless volunteers must have been enrolled in large numbers from the late third century BC, and their recruitment had supposedly been regularized in

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¹ *RMR*; *DERE*; *O Claud.* 1–III; *O Florida*; *T.Vindol.* 1–III; *T.Vindon.*; *O BuNjem*; *CIL* VIII, with Le Bohec (1989).

107 BC by Marius.² 'Pay' to Roman soldiers began in the fourth century BC with occasional distributions of weighed bronze (see vol. 1, pp. 488–91). From the third century BC to the late first century AD a fixed daily sum was paid to those on active service, notionally as a reimbursement of expenses, which was therefore subject to deductions for supplies which soldiers should, in theory, have provided themselves. By the second century BC all soldiers who wished were issued with armour and weapons, and clothing too from 123/122 BC, but the cost of replacement equipment, and of their wheat ration, was deducted from their wages, and this continued through the Principate.³ Another persistent idea was that farmers made the best soldiers and that discharged soldiers should return to farming, where they would produce sons for future recruitment.

From the reform of Roman coinage around 214 BC the cash allowance of the Roman legionary was fixed at 3 copper (sextantal) *asses* a day, that is 3/10 of a *denarius*, the standard silver coin. Centurions received twice this and cavalrymen, in part to support their horses, three times as much. Occasionally, triumphant commanders used booty to double the pay of their troops. When the copper coinage was again reformed around 140 BC the daily rate in the old *asses* was retained and was converted into silver *denarii* for payment, usually made long in arrears. Almost a century later Julius Caesar permanently doubled the basic rate to 10 (uncial) *asses* a day, that is 10/16 of a *denarius*, which made it more like pay than expenses; payment was still made mostly in silver *denarii* and long in arrears.⁴ Daily pay became annual salary when Augustus instituted long-term enlistment, in 13 BC of sixteen years, in AD 5 of twenty years with five years' recall (often more in practice; see p. 37 above); the year was reckoned at 360 days, making an annual legionary salary (*stipendium*) of 225 *denarii*.⁵ The *stipendium* was paid in arrears, apparently in three four-monthly instalments (also called *stipendia*), an arrangement which continued into the fourth century. The Caesarian-Augustan rate lasted until AD 84, when Domitian increased it by a third to 300 *denarii* a year, a salary no longer based on a daily sum.⁶ This rate in turn lasted for over a century until Septimius Severus' increase.

Contemporary historians say that Septimius Severus increased military pay in 197, but not by how much, and that in 212 his son Caracalla increased by a half the pay of the praetorian guard. In 217 Macrinus claimed that

² Rich (1983); Rathbone (1993a) esp. 139–45.

³ Polyb. 6.39.12–15; Plut. *Vit. C. Gracch.* 5.1. Principate: see pp. 163–5 below.

⁴ Polyb. 6.39.12; Suet. *Iul.* 26.3; with Rathbone (1993a) 151–2. Pedroni (2001) is ingenious but implausible. It seems that Caesar left the cavalry rate unchanged, so the pay ratio of infantry to cavalry changed from 1:3 to 1:1.5 (see further pp. 160–1, 168–9 below).

⁵ Suet. *Aug.* 49.2; Dio Cass. 54.25.5–6, 55.23.1; Tac. *Ann.* 1.17. The most important modern discussions of military pay in the Principate are Brunt (1950); M. A. Speidel (1992) (cf. *T.Vindon.* 64–6); and Alston (1994).

⁶ Suet. *Dom.* 7.3; Dio Cass. 67.3.5.

Caracalla's pay rise was costing 70 million *denarii* a year and revoked it for new recruits, but in 218 he promised to, or did, reinstate Caracalla's 'rations' and other increases. The troops found the reign of Severus Alexander 'unprofitable', and in 235 the usurper Maximinus Thrax promised to, or did, double the pay of the troops with him.⁷ Inscriptions from Lambaesis reveal that the detachments of the *legio III Augusta* which served in the eastern campaigns of Septimius Severus (195, 197–8) and of Caracalla and Antoninus (215–17) were rewarded with double pay, and so, presumably, were the other units involved.⁸ Two third-century military accounts from Egypt record credits to soldiers (type unknown) of just under 258 *denarii* out of one *stipendium* instalment, which implies an annual salary of well over 773 *denarii*, perhaps 900 *denarii*.⁹ A series of official letters of AD 300, under Diocletian, order payment of lump sums to various units: on the most plausible interpretation, auxiliaries in a cohort received 1,200 *denarii* as annual *stipendium* plus 600 *denarii* 'for the price of *annona*', and those in an *ala* 1,800 *denarii stipendium* plus 600 for *annona*; the annual *stipendium* of a detachment of legionaries (cavalry?) escorting the governor could have been 1,200 or 1,800 *denarii* or more.¹⁰

This incomplete and tangled record of rises, whether promised or implemented, whether to all troops or specific units, does not permit any secure reconstruction of developments. Perhaps Septimius Severus doubled the pay of his triumphant eastern forces (i.e. to 600 *denarii* for legionaries), then extended this to all troops to compensate them for recent price rises (see p. 165 below); conversely, Caracalla's smaller rise, perhaps adding a separate 300 *denarii* for 'rations', was resisted by the civilian élite because it was a real increase. Aurelian, or his successors, may have been responsible for the increase, or increases, from the Caracallan *stipendium* to the Diocletianic 1,200 plus 600 *denarii*.

The pay rates for auxiliary infantry and cavalry in the Principate, and for legionary cavalry, remain uncertain and disputed. The simplest solution, which fits the available data and the low rate of legionary pay (see pp. 164–5 below), is that auxiliary infantry, and the navy and *vigiles* too, received the same *stipendium* as legionaries, and that cavalry in legions and *alae*, but not in mixed cohorts, received basic *stipendium* and a half.¹¹ Differentiation

⁷ Septimius: Herodian 3.8.4–5; cf. *SHA Sev.* 12.2. Caracalla–Macrinus: Herodian 4.4.7; Dio Cass. 78.12.7, 28.2–4, 34.2–3 (*trophê*, 'rations'), 36.1–3. Alexander–Maximinus: Herodian 6.8.4, 8. For 'pay' Herodian uses the Greek *siteresion*, which also means '(wheat) rations', like the Latin *annona*; cf. Develin (1971).

⁸ *AE* 1895.204, with Dessau (1908) 462–3; *CIL* VIII 2564, with 18052. *Principales* at Lambaesis also made dedications to Severan emperors 'from their most generous pay' (e.g. *CIL* VIII 2553, 2554).

⁹ *ChLA* x 446 and xi 495, with Jahn (1983) but also n. 11 below on interpretation.

¹⁰ *P Panop.* Beatty 2.36–42, 57–60, 292–8, with Duncan-Jones (1978); cf. Jahn (1984).

¹¹ M. A. Speidel (1992) and Alston (1994) review and supersede previous views. The sums in 'pay' accounts, such as *RMR* 68 and 69 and *P Masada* 722, which Speidel takes to be auxiliary *stipendium* at five-sixths the legionary rate, are better explained by Alston, following Watson, as the proportion of

was made in other ways: in the first century auxiliaries did not receive donatives, and legionaries always enjoyed greater discharge benefits than auxiliaries (see pp. 162–3 below).

Most soldiers in the Roman army remained on the basic *stipendium* throughout their service. In the Republic individual or collective prowess might be rewarded with double pay and rations. From the 130s BC the praetorian cohort, the general's guard, received pay and a half. Centurions, the only rank between legionaries and officers, received double pay in the second century BC, perhaps raised to five times basic pay by the 40s BC, but in the Republic this post was only held temporarily at each general's whim.¹² In the Principate double pay was still used as a special reward, but all units had a few special posts, the *principales*, who received pay and a half (*sesquiplicarii*) or double pay (*duplicarii*, *duplari*).¹³ The new praetorian guard in Rome, recruited directly in Italy, was paid three times the basic rate, 675 *denarii* per annum, and the urban cohorts probably received pay and a half (see pp. 39–48 above).¹⁴

Being a centurion or cavalry decurion was now a lifetime appointment, more often by direct commission from among leading municipal families than by promotion from the ranks, at least until the third century. Officers from tribunes and prefects upwards were normally drawn from the equestrian and senatorial orders (see pp. 37–9, 51–3 above). The pay rates of centurions and officers are uncertain. Legionary centurions probably received fifteen times basic pay, 3,375 *denarii* per annum, centurions of the first cohort perhaps twice as much, and *primi pili* 13,500 *denarii*, sixty times basic pay. Praetorian tribunes apparently were paid between 25,000 and 50,000 *denarii* a year, other tribunes and prefects perhaps between 10,000 and 25,000 *denarii*. It is normally assumed that these rates were increased proportionately in AD 84, 197 and so on, but this is not proven; in AD 300 one *praepositus* (centurion, or tribune?) of legionary cavalry received an annual *stipendium* of 54,000 *denarii*, forty-five times the infantry *stipendium*.¹⁵

legionary *stipendium* retained by military accountants to cover their deductions. Other key evidence includes: *P Vindon.* 2 (AD 36): *eques cohortis* probably has an annual *stipendium* of 225 *denarii*; *AE* 1969/70.583 (100s): *duplicarius* of legionary cavalry becomes *duplicarius* of *ala*; *ILS* 2487.Aa (128): Hadrian says cohort cavalry receive less *stipendium* than *ala* cavalry; *CPapLat* 188 (140): to repay loan, *eques cohortis* must earn over 237 *denarii* a year; *RMR* 70 (later 190s): *stipendium* of auxiliary infantry is over 253 *denarii* a year; *P Panop. Beatty* 2 (300): *stipendium* of *ala* cavalry is a half more than that of cohort soldiers. The assumption that all 'career' moves attested in inscriptions were promotions accompanied by rises in pay is modernizing and false.

¹² Rewards: Livy 7.37.2; Varro, *Ling.* 5.90; Caes. *B Civ.* 5.53.5 etc. Praetorians: Festus 249 L. Centurions: Polyb. 6.39.12; App. *B Civ.* 4.100, 120: quintuple donatives promised in 42 BC.

¹³ Breeze (1971) and (1974a). He estimates almost 10 per cent *principales*, but a norm nearer 2 per cent is attested in *RMR* 47, 50 and 63; *CIL* viii 18068; *AE* 1969–70.633.

¹⁴ Dio Cass. 53.11.5 (29 BC): 'doubled', with Brunt (1950) 55; Tac. *Ann.* 1.17 (AD 14): a *denarius* a day, roughly. Tac. *Ann.* 1.8; Dio Cass. 59.2.1–3 (AD 14, 37): urban cohorts received donatives of 125 *denarii*, probably their *stipendium* instalment of 112.5 *denarii* rounded up to the nearest *aureus*.

¹⁵ Dobson (1972), (1974); with Brunt (1950) 67–9; M. A. Speidel (1992) 102–3; Campbell (1984) 101–5; Hassall (2000) 327–9. AD 300: *P Panop. Beatty* 2.197–203, with no allowance for *annona*.

Other payments to soldiers included a 'travel allowance' (*viaticum*) of 25 *denarii* on enlistment.¹⁶ Increasingly, soldiers were compensated for maintenance expenses: in AD 65 Nero granted the praetorians free wheat rations; by Flavian times, 'hobnail-money' (*clavarium*) was paid for long marches; in AD 179 some auxiliary cavalry were receiving 25 *denarii* each for grazing(?); by AD 300 all auxiliary soldiers were receiving a flat 600 *denarii* per annum 'for the price of rations'.¹⁷ Booty from campaigns was rarer than in the Republic, but rewarding when rich cities were sacked, like Jerusalem in AD 70 or Ctesiphon in 197. Soldiers seconded to administrative and escort duties had opportunities to take gifts and make deals; military administration itself was greased with gifts, including the notorious perks of centurions.¹⁸

Cash donatives from emperors, to reinforce loyalty at critical moments such as accessions and adoptions, were irregular in frequency and size until the late third century. From Augustus to Septimius Severus, most recorded sums are of 250 *denarii* or less; the exceptions are the 2,500 *denarii* given to his army by Octavian, and Claudius' 3,750 *denarii*, Marcus Aurelius' 5,000 *denarii* and Caracalla's 2,500 *denarii* to the praetorian guard, all (except Marcus?) to smooth the seizure of power. Originally, auxiliaries did not receive donatives; the first known case is from Hadrian. By AD 300 standardized flat-rate donatives for all troops and officers were being paid regularly: 2,500 *denarii* for imperial birthdays and accession days and 1,200 *denarii* for imperial consulships, which implies at least 10,000 *denarii* a year for the two Augusti, over five times the basic infantry remuneration of 1,800 *denarii* and twice that if similar donatives were paid for the two Caesars too.¹⁹

Other benefits came on discharge. The traditional idea in the Republic was to settle poor citizens on allotments of land which made them possessors of the property qualification for self-funded military service. Increasingly, however, the Romans had to recruit landless men and allot them farms on discharge. Veterans disliked settlement in the overseas provinces where there was spare public land, but confiscation of private land in Italy by civil war generals from Sulla to Octavian caused political turmoil (see pp. 177–85 below). Hence in 13 BC Augustus himself started paying discharge bounties in cash instead of granting land. In AD 5–6 this system was made official, with state funding. The bounty was set at 3,000 *denarii* for legionaries after

¹⁶ Tac. *Hist.* 1.57 (AD 69): *BGU* II 423 = *Sel. Pap.* 1 II2 (second century AD, in cash); *RMR* 70 (late 190s); perhaps *P Thomas* 21 (third century AD).

¹⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 15.72; Tac. *Hist.* 3.50 and Suet. *Vesp.* 8.3; *RMR* 76; *P Panop. Beatty* 2.36–42, 292–8, with Duncan-Jones (1978).

¹⁸ Secondment: Davies (1974a). Centurions: Tac. *Ann.* 1.17; *Hist.* 1.46, 58. Corruption: Plin. *Ep.* 7.31.2.

¹⁹ Watson (1983) 108–14 is the fullest list of donatives; Campbell (1984) 165–71, 188–98 is the best discussion, despite Stäcker (2003). Auxiliaries: *ILS* 9134; cf. *O Claud.* II 58; *O Florida* 6. AD 300: *P Panop. Beatty* 2, with Duncan-Jones (1978).

twenty years and 5,000 *denarii* for praetorians after sixteen years, with much larger sums for centurions; in AD 215 Caracalla increased it to 5,000 *denarii* for legionaries and perhaps 6,250 *denarii* for praetorians.²⁰ Up to AD 83 the bounty represented 40 per cent of a legionary's total remuneration (over twenty years), and from 84 to 197 it was still 33 per cent, which made it a powerful inducement to discipline, loyalty and survival; from 215 onwards it was only 22 per cent, and by the end of the third century it seems to have faded into obsolescence, in effect replaced by regular donatives.

Emperors continued to try to settle veterans in underdeveloped areas to aid their pacification, normally by allocating individual farms, but sometimes, up to Hadrian, by settling men *en bloc* to create or revive communities with the status of 'colonies'; it is usually assumed, but not certain, that such land allotments were made in place of the cash bounty. On average 120 men per annum were discharged from a legion, which will have needed 200 recruits annually to maintain it at 80 per cent strength at normal mortality rates; a recruit had a 60 per cent chance of living to collect his discharge bounty.²¹ Auxiliaries did not receive a cash bounty or land on discharge; instead, in the first to second centuries, they were granted Roman citizenship (see p. 51 above). Legionary veterans in theory enjoyed immunity from imperial and civic liturgies on the person, although they sometimes found this hard to maintain; from Domitian onwards, they also enjoyed immunity from imperial customs dues. Auxiliary veterans were still not exempt from liturgies in Diocletian's day.²²

The economic position of the soldier in the Principate, or his disposable cash income, are not easy to assess. The Roman army used a complex system of accounting which makes it difficult to interpret the few surviving fragments of particular types of accounts (fig. 5.1). In the first and second centuries it seems that around 80 per cent of each soldier's pay, minus a 1 per cent accounting fee, was credited to a sort of 'bank account' with his unit, against which regular deductions were made for the basic food ration, boots and leggings and so on (accommodation was free), and *ad hoc* deductions were made for extra supplies and replacement equipment. If a surplus was left, a soldier could withdraw it as cash or transfer it as a 'deposit' to the unit's strongbox.²³ Most rates of *stipendium*, the *viaticum* and donatives were multiples of 25 *denarii*, the value of the main gold coin (*aureus*), but because gold coins had an intrinsic premium value, the state reserved them

²⁰ Augustus: Dio Cass. 54.25.5–6, 55.23.1, 57.4.2; Suet. *Aug.* 49.2; Tac. *Ann.* 1.17; cf. section III below. Caracalla: Dio Cass. 77.24.1. Cf. Watson (1965); Corbier (1977).

²¹ Allotments: Mann (1983). Survival: Scheidel (1996a) (amended). If the bounty was paid when due, after twenty years' service, even if soldiers were retained for another five years, more will have received it.

²² Link (1989); Wolff (1986); cf. Alston (1995) 60–8.

²³ M. A. Speidel (1992); Alston (1994).

denarii a year, and a municipal dogsbody 150 *denarii*.²⁶ The Caesarian-Augustan *stipendium* of 225 *denarii* was reasonable but not generous. More attractive were the extra payments, including bribes when on administrative or supply duties, the anticipated job security and discharge bounty, and the sense of superiority which soldiering conferred. Most soldiers also had private economic interests (see p. 176 below).

Price evidence from Egypt, which probably reflects empire-wide trends, shows stability from the 70s to 160s AD, then a doubling of prices set off by the Antonine plague, another period of stability from the 190s until 274, when Aurelian's reform of the coinage unleashed a tenfold rise in prices, and further rises in response to Diocletian's coinage reforms of 294–6 and 301.²⁷ Against this background, Domitian's pay-rise of AD 84 probably meant a small increase in real terms. Septimius Severus' increase in 197, if of 100 per cent, restored the real value of the *stipendium*, and Caracalla's 50 per cent rise was then a pure increase in remuneration; however, if Septimius' rise had been 50 per cent, even Caracalla's rise would have left soldiers only 12.5 per cent better off in real terms than before the Antonine plague. By AD 300 the real value of the *stipendium* had plummeted: 1,800 *denarii* is ten times less than the maximum daily wage of 50 *denarii* prescribed for craftsmen in Diocletian's Maximum Price Edict of 301, probably over ten times less than the real value of the *stipendium* from Caesar to Septimius Severus; to reach parity, a soldier would have needed to receive over 16,000 *denarii* in donatives every year. Some scholars suggest that rations and equipment were by now supplied free, but the specific allowance for *annona* still paid in AD 300 tells against this, as does the stated aim of Diocletian's edict to stop greedy suppliers depriving soldiers of their donative and *stipendium* in one purchase.²⁸ However, the old monetary system was collapsing, to be replaced in the fourth century with a new state economy based on gold coins and rations (see pp. 401–2 below).

II. EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Roman forces, in war and peace, were considerable consumers of raw materials, craft products, agricultural produce, foodstuffs, labour and transport resources (fig. 5.2).²⁹ The four centuries of the late Republic and Principate are supposed to have seen two major changes in Roman military provisioning. The first was the replacement of the Rome-based private contractors used in the Republic to supply the expeditionary forces levied for each war

²⁶ *Roman Statutes* 1 no. 25, ch. lxiii (re-inscribed in the Flavian period).

²⁷ Rathbone (1997). ²⁸ Frank (1940) 314 (preface to edict), 336–46 (wages).

²⁹ This section draws especially on Kissel (1995); Roth (1999); Wierschowski (1984); also Whittaker (1994); Mitthof (2001); Erdkamp (2002).



Figure 5.2 Scene from Trajan's column depicting soldiers foraging for supplies. Living off the land was a vital part of campaigning throughout the pre-modern era, despite the vulnerabilities it created to enemy action.

(see vol. 1, pp. 488–9) with a province-based civil administration supplying, still from taxation and purchases, the dispersed units of the standing, largely peacetime, army of the Principate. The second change was the abandonment of this system in the third century AD in favour of direct requisitioning of supplies, without compensation, by the army, the so-called *annona militaris* (see pp. 403–8 below). The first supposed change masks important continuities; the second is probably a scholarly misunderstanding. Scholars also disagree over the extent to which army units supplied themselves through their own craft and agricultural production, and whether this differed between the western and eastern provinces or changed over time.

The legions levied and disbanded as needed in the Republic had no permanent bases. When campaigns lasted more than a year they might build as winter camps slightly more elaborate versions of the normal temporary marching camp with an earth embankment and palisade of wooden stakes. A few drawn-out sieges, such as those of Numantia and Alesia, required substantial siege-works. The materials were to hand; soldiers provided the labour; costs were minimal. Even the armed forces of the Principate had low infrastructure costs. The twenty to thirty legionary bases in the provinces started as wooden structures and only gradually became monumentalized in stone. The forts for auxiliary units and detachments, perhaps some 500 throughout the empire, were built of wood or local stone. Large defensive works were rare: the palisading of the Rhine–Danube re-entrant, and the unique folly of Hadrian's Wall, half built in stone. The most impressive, primarily military, installation was the empire-wide network of paved main roads, but these also served civilian needs (see pp. 66–71, 100–2, 118–19 above).

The initial labour was often military, but maintenance was frequently by conscript or hired civilian workers; on one day at Vindolanda, there were 343 men employed on 'jobs' (*officia*), many engaged in constructing and repairing buildings. The main materials, timber and stone, were taken from public lands and quarries or enemy territory. The distribution of terracotta

roof-tiles with legionary stamps in some north-western provinces is best explained as private use, perhaps after purchase, of surplus production in the *fabricae*.³⁰ Individual numbers can impress, such as the 16-kilometre radius within which all trees were felled during the AD 70 siege of Jerusalem, or the million iron nails (10 tonnes) buried when the legionary base of Inchtuthil was abandoned around AD 86; but military building activities and costs were insignificant compared to civilian urban construction.³¹ The standing navy of the Principate, with a total of perhaps 200 to 250 triremes, was small compared to the aggregate Mediterranean fleets of the Hellenistic states. Physical and documentary evidence for naval dockyards and their workers is rather sparse, but while the ships were probably relatively inexpensive to build, maintenance was a regular, and probably quite heavy, expense (see pp. 55–8 above, and vol. 1, pp. 361–7).³²

Throughout the period from the second century BC to the third century AD the production and supply of armour and weapons was mostly regional and relatively small scale. This was because communication and transport facilities did not make centralized supply easy, because techniques of production allowed only limited economies of scale, and because of the continuing tradition that soldiers should equip themselves.³³ Through to the Civil Wars Republican armies were normally levied *en masse* and equipped in Italy, and then demobilized there. The basic equipment was simple: helmet, heart-protector (metal disk), greaves for some, shield, sword and two javelins (*pila*). Although soldiers were meant to arm themselves, and richer ones certainly did so, some wearing expensive ringmail, the poorer recruits were loaned equipment by the state, and increasing recruitment of landless men is reflected in the production of more standardized and poorer-quality helmets and swords. Normally the state engaged private contractors (*publicani*) to meet this need, and perhaps also to provide the repair and resupply facilities essential on campaigns, for which workshops are attested archaeologically in camps in Spain. In times of crisis allied or subject communities could be asked or required to provide arms as well as other supplies. In either case, the system to be envisaged is groups of small private workshops, most in the towns of central western Italy, whose products were bought individually by richer soldiers or ordered in quantity by contractors.³⁴

³⁰ *T.Vindol.* II 155, corr. III pp. 155–6 (early 90s). Tiles: Bérard (1992) 79, 85; Swann and Philpott (2000).

³¹ Jerusalem: Joseph. *BJ* 5.262–4, 522–3. Inchtuthil: Pitts and St Joseph (1985) 289–92; cf. Shirley (2001). Totals: see section III below.

³² Starr (1993); Reddé (1986). Hellenistic fleets: see ch. 13, vol. 1. Costs: cf. Rathbone (2003); *RMR* 82 (second century AD, maintenance). *CIL* x 3392 and 3418–27 attest a naval architect and ship's carpenters of the Misenum praetorian fleet.

³³ The best syntheses are Coulston (1998) and Kissel (1995) 177–95, with extensive bibliographies.

³⁴ Polyb. 6.22–3 (mid-second century BC); with e.g. Diod. Sic. 5.13.2 (by first century BC); Caes. *B. Civ.* 1.6.8 (46 BC); Dio Cass. 46.31.4 (43 BC). Helmets: Paddock (1985). Camps: Mutz 1987.

The army of the Principate, in contrast, was permanent, scattered in bases across the empire, with increasing functional differentiation of units and men, and hence more complex equipment. Heavier body armour was standard, whether ring- or scalemail or the individually fitted *lorica segmentata*, with a varied array of weapons (see pp. 58–63 above). On the one hand this encouraged a more dispersed supply system; on the other, the more bureaucratic form of government and permanence of the units permitted more centralized direction. Archaeological finds show an endless variety of detail in arms, but movements of men and units diffused new fashions, and through patterns and inspection the army maintained sufficient standardization for tactical functionality. There is considerable evidence, mainly archaeological and from the western and central provinces, for production of arms by the army, and considerable evidence, mainly written and from the eastern provinces, for civilian production. Although some scholars believe that this reflects a regional difference of practice they are different aspects of a common system.

Excavations and inscriptions in the west show that the major military bases of the Principate had arms stores (*armamentaria*), supervised by *custodes armorum*, and workshops (*fabricae*) for the production and repair of weapons. Stocks of scrap arms were kept for recycling, which produced a distinctive copper alloy. Soldiers sometimes marked equipment with their name and unit, and reissued items with up to four names are known.³⁵ The implication that basic equipment could be provided, replaced and repaired by the state, and had to be handed back on discharge, is echoed in the east. Pay records show soldiers being debited with fixed sums for the provision of boots and leggings, and charged irregular variable sums for replacement of, or repairs to, clothes and arms, while other accounts show repayment to veterans or their family of the notional value of arms handed in on discharge or death.³⁶ Gravestones and other texts from the west attest craftsmen, such as sword- and shield-makers, and ship's carpenters, who were serving soldiers, but a document from Egypt also reveals a *fabrica* staffed mainly by legionaries, and a legal text of general import says that soldiers exempt from fatigues (*immunes*) included craftsmen who produced arms.³⁷

On the other hand there is evidence from east and west that soldiers might purchase basic items of equipment, or extras like sword-arm guards (*manicae*), on the private market, and the equipment which soldiers pledged

³⁵ Bishop (1985a); MacMullen (1960); cf. Tac. *Hist.* 2.67 (AD 69).

³⁶ Charges: e.g. *P Masada* 722, *RMR* 68 and 69 (first century AD), *P Princ. Univ.* 11 57 (third century AD?). Refunds: *RMR* 73.11.18 = *DERE* 34; *SB* x 10530 (both second century AD).

³⁷ E.g. *RIB* 1 156 (Bath, first century AD); *T.Vindol.* 11 160 (late first century); *CIL* x 3419–27 (Misennum, second century AD). Egypt: *ChLA* x 409 (second to third century). *Immunes. Dig.* 50.6.7 (late second).

as security for loans, or dedicated as offerings to deities, must have been private. Also, as in the later Republic, soldiers of all ranks were keen to personalize their equipment, often with elaborate ornamentation in tin or aniello (to look like silver). Hadrian said that he expected the cavalry of an *ala* to have finer horses and richer equipment than the cavalry of a cohort because their *stipendium* was greater.³⁸ Texts of various kinds randomly attest private arms manufacturers and dealers across the empire, often in the vicinity of military camps. Civilian producers are also found working for the army, sometimes under military supervision, but whether as direct employees or as contractors is unclear. Materials to make weapons and related equipment could be levied from taxpayers just like other supplies.³⁹ When major expeditions were being mounted for external or civil wars, weapons and armour were among the supplies requested or demanded from civic communities, following Republican practice, not just in the east but in western provinces too. Local workshops are said to have turned to arms production; probably the communities farmed out the task of collection and delivery to contractors or liturgists.⁴⁰

The common system seems to have been that state production, by a mixture of army craftsmen and civilian contractors in *fabricae* in camps or nearby towns, was intended to meet a fair proportion of the normal steady peacetime demand for arms, but individual soldiers were constantly buying items from private craftsmen, and when speedy large-scale provision was necessary, the state depended, just as it had in the Republic, on the ability of the civil administration to mobilize the production of private, often non-specialist, workshops. Indeed, these flurries of production before major campaigns imply that there was no planned build-up of stocks of equipment in peacetime, a legacy of the *ad hoc* arrangements and financing of the Republic. By the fourth century AD more planned and centralized equipment of strike forces had been facilitated by the institution of large regional *fabricae* staffed by conscripted civilian workers (see pp. 406–8 below).⁴¹

Both in the Republic and the Principate the state was meant to supply its soldiers with basic rations, clothing, tents or housing, horses for the cavalry and their fodder, and transport when needed. The basic ration for soldiers

³⁸ E.g. Suet. *Jul.* 67.2 (mid-first century BC); *SB* xvi 12609 (AD 27); Tac. *Hist.* 1.57 (69); *P Mich.* viii 467 (early second century); *CPapLat* 189 (153); cf. Coulston (1998): 170–5. Hadrian: *ILS* 2487.Aa.

³⁹ Civilian supply: e.g. *CIL* xiii 11504 (Vindonissa, first century AD; perhaps a freedman of a soldier); *W Chrest* 326, and *P Mich.* viii 467 (Egypt, early second century AD); *CIL* xiii 6677 (Mainz, late second century; a veteran). Army supervision: *T.Vindol.* ii 155 (ca. 90s); *CIL* xiii 2828 (Gaul, third century AD). Levies: *DERE* 58 (AD 143); 60 and 62 (early third century); 61 (265). The lack of gravestones of shipyard workers at Misenum and Ravenna hints that they were civilians, not soldiers (unlike the ship's carpenters above).

⁴⁰ E.g. Tac. *Ann.* 1.71 (Gaul, Spain and Italy, AD 15); Tac. *Hist.* 2.82 (eastern provinces, 69); Dio Cass. 69.12.2 (Judaea, c. 130); *CIL* xiii 6763 (Italy, 238).

⁴¹ *P Panop. Beatty* 1.213–16, 342–6 (September 298) shows an early, but perhaps emergency, case.

was 4 *modii* of unmilled wheat a month (around 25 kg), or one *artaba* (30 kg) in Egypt, plus small quantities of wine, oil and meat. Horses were allowed around 2.5 kg of barley a day, rather low by modern standards, and so must have needed 7 kg or more of hay. These rates, which remained standard from the second century BC into the fourth century AD, were adequate but not generous, and soldiers purchased their own extras. Probably the supply system was extended to cover civilian workers in forts, but not the personal dependants of soldiers, unless they were employed as workers. In theory it is possible to quantify the aggregate annual demand of a military unit and the area of production needed to meet it, but such estimates are plagued with uncertainties and do not correspond with the actual system of supply.

In the Republic it was ultimately the responsibility of each general to see to the supply of his army on the campaign for which it had been raised; the Senate would allocate him funds, and might arrange some supplies through other magistrates or contractors.⁴² The preferred Roman strategy was to prepare adequate logistical support for expeditions, rather than to rely on living off enemy or allied territory (see pp. 102–4 above, and vol. 1, pp. 383–8). From the late third century BC the provision and transport of supplies was assigned by competitive tendering to private contractors (*publicani*). For a flat fee paid by the state, they undertook to acquire and transport a certain quantity of, say, wheat for the Roman armies in Spain. Or they might contract just to transport supplies already acquired by the state through provincial taxation, additional compulsory purchase (best attested in Sicily) or gifts. The *publicani* ran their own businesses alongside state contracts – in the late second and first centuries BC, for example, enormous quantities of Italian wine were exported into Celtic Gaul, and slaves acquired in return, by the same shippers and merchants who were supplying the Roman armies in the west. When major campaigns were mounted, allied or subject states sometimes volunteered to provide supplies free, and sometimes to transport them where they were needed. Following Achaemenid and Hellenistic precedents generals could requisition supplies from subject communities, including the use of ships, animals and men for transport, billet of troops, and raise *ad hoc* cash taxes to fund pay and supplies. The distinction between voluntary and enforced contributions was often muddy, and as direct Roman rule of provinces spread, the senate tried to restrict requisitions and the soliciting of offers to emergencies; inevitably requisition was rife in the civil wars which ended the Republic.

The standing army of the Principate in peacetime instead required a steady dispersed provision of supplies (see pp. 226–30 below). In the western empire legions and some auxiliary units were assigned areas of frontier land, or of Roman public land in provinces, sometimes demarcated by boundary

⁴² See Erdkamp (1998); also Badian (1972); Scramuzza (1937); Tchernia (1986) 66–107.

stones, to use for grazing their horses and other animals (*prata legionis*) to meet the large need for soft fodder. There may have been less suitable public land in the east and so more purchasing of fodder was necessary. There is, however, no sound evidence anywhere for the regular breeding of animals or any other agricultural production by the military.⁴³

Peacetime supplies of rations and other essentials were organized, as far as possible, within each province by the governor and procurator. Normal taxation in kind and cash was used to provide the basic pay and supplies of the units in each province, supplemented by the produce of imperial estates. Where troop concentrations exceeded the fiscal capacity of the immediate provinces or items were not available locally (mainly along the northern frontiers), the state arranged transfers of the tax surplus from less heavily garrisoned provinces, such as the Baetican olive oil shipped to the Rhine bases. Taxpayers, as individuals or communities, were responsible for delivery of their taxes in kind to regional centres, which could include army bases, but the state still used *publicani* to ship inter-provincial transfers like the Baetican oil, or the *annona* (food supply) of Rome (including its garrison), and within provinces it still contracted out at least some of the supply of posts outside the normal range of civilian liturgists, like those at Vindolanda (Britain) or Mons Claudianus and Pselkis (Egypt).⁴⁴

Taxes in kind were paid mostly in wheat or other agricultural produce, or were commuted to cash payments, and so did not satisfy all the state's material needs. To bridge the gap an empire-wide system of compulsory purchase was developed, based on Republican precedent (in Sicily, for instance), which is best documented in second- and third-century Egypt.⁴⁵ An annual schedule issued by the governor allocated to each nome, roughly the Egyptian equivalent of a civic territory, its quota for supplies of all types, and the nome authorities distributed the allocation among the villages. The nome, or civic, and village officials were responsible for acquiring and delivering the goods, and delegated the task to associations of craftsmen and others as a liturgic obligation, or to contractors; deliveries were checked and escorted by a soldier from the receiving unit, who issued a receipt. Probably allocations changed little from year to year; some units seem to have had regular links with particular nomes. The local officials used the receipts to reclaim from the state the cost of supplies at the price set in the governor's schedule, which was funded out of the basic taxation in cash. The Egyptian

⁴³ Bérard (1992); cf. Mason (1988); Dixon and Southern (1992) 206–17.

⁴⁴ Local taxes: e.g. Tac. *Ann.* 2.6 (Gaul); Tac. *Agr.* 19.4–5 (Britain); *RMR* 81 (Egypt); *O BuNjem* 75 (Africa). Imperial estates: e.g. *P Dura* 64.A.i (Mesopotamia); *P Panop. Beatty* 1.205–12 (Egypt). Baetican oil: Remesal Rodríguez (1986), (1997). Rome: Sirks (1991). Distant posts: *T.Vindol.* II–III, especially III 649; *O Claud.* I–III; *RMR* 78.

⁴⁵ See Carrié (1977); Kissel (1995); Mitthof (2001) 37–81. Important texts include: *P Oxy* XIX 2230 (AD 119); *SB* XX 14155–62, *DERE* 54 etc. (185); *BGU* III 842 (187); *PSI* VI 683 (199); *DERE* 60 (215); 65 (220); *P Oxy* XII 1414 (c. 274); cf. *P Dura* 129 (225, Mesopotamia).

evidence shows that the prices paid by the state were centrally fixed, not local market rates, but were fair averages of the usual price range, and were raised if prices were unusually high. Military accounts show that soldiers were charged notional sums for supplies, probably the same, like their pay, across the empire, for instance an unvarying 125 *denarii* for a horse, and that the regular debits for food, boots and hay were increased by a third in AD 84 to match Domitian's pay-rise.⁴⁶

Other measures provided for troops on the move. Individual soldiers or units, like civilian officials, travelling on state business had the right, of Persian (Achaemenid) imperial origin, to requisition food, accommodation and carriage from individual subjects and communities (*angareia*); frequent abuse of the right is attested by numerous edicts from governors and other sources.⁴⁷ Preparations for major campaigns with unusual troop concentrations followed Republican practice: special levies of supplies were imposed, normally with cash compensation but not in crises such as civil wars, when there might be extra cash levies too. Wealthy individuals or communities sometimes offered free or cheap logistical support either voluntarily or under pressure. Transport of supplies to the front was arranged through a mixture of liturgic imposition and paid contracting.⁴⁸

The variety and complexity of mechanisms used to supply the Roman imperial army, and the biases of place, period and type in the survival of evidence, make it difficult to be sure whether apparent differences between regions or across time were real or are illusory. There was much continuity from the second century BC to third century AD. The increasing urbanization, more bureaucratic government and standing army of the Principate led to the development of a regular system for regional provision, an *annona* (as some third-century Egyptian documents call it), but without excluding *publicani*, who were still used for long-distance, especially maritime, transport (fig. 5.3), and without obviating the need for the traditional *ad hoc* solutions when supplying major strike forces. No new system was introduced by the Severan emperors. Dio's complaint against Caracalla, which Egyptian documents endorse, is of frequent requisitions with no cash reimbursement, and additional cash levies too – that is, abuse of existing practices.⁴⁹ Rather than Caracalla's pay increase, the principal problem was the much greater frequency of major civil and external campaigns in

⁴⁶ Purchase prices: Rathbone (1997) 197–8. Horses: *RMR* 75 (Egypt, AD 139); 99 and 83 (Mesopotamia, 208 and 251). AD 84 increases: compare *RMR* 69 (late first century) with 68 (AD 83).

⁴⁷ *AE* 1976.653 = *SEG* xxvi 1392 (Galatia, c. AD 15) is a classic example.

⁴⁸ Roth (1999); Kissel (1995) 54–77.

⁴⁹ Dio Cass. 77.9.3, 21.3, with *P Yale* III 137; *P Stras.* VII 688. For the idea of a Severan *annona militaris* see van Berchem (1937), modified by van Berchem (1977); Mitthof (2001) 37–81 (56–64 on the term *annona*). The novelties which Mitthof sees in some third-century documents are the result of Septimius Severus' introduction of town councils to Egypt in AD 200/1, which 'normalized' local civil administration in Egypt (see below pp. 226–31).

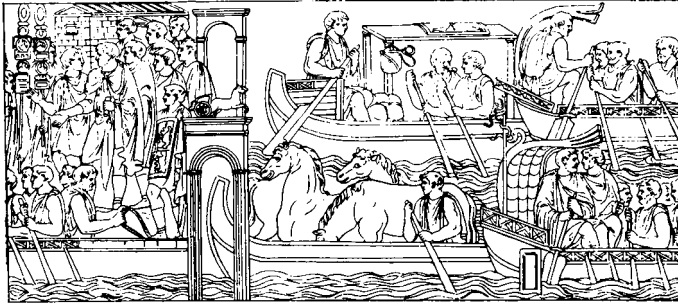


Figure 5.3 Scene from Trajan's column depicting horses and supplies being transported by boat. Water transport was a key element of Roman military activity, as it was in the Roman economy as a whole.

the third century, for which supplies had constantly to be mobilized by extra levies. Amazingly the system saw the Empire through these crises. It collapsed when Aurelian and Diocletian inadvertently destroyed the monetized state economy through their coinage reforms. By 298–300 a new structure was in place in Egypt: although many old elements were re-used, there was now a single assessment system for all taxation and levies, introduced by Diocletian in 297, and tax-paying communities were directed to deliver supplies, and also large cash sums for pay and donatives, directly to detachments or soldiers, and even to individual officers.⁵⁰

III. IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

The lack of ancient statistics makes it very difficult to assess the overall impact of the Roman army and warfare on the economy of the Roman world.⁵¹ All estimates of the annual pay bill of the army of the Principate have arrived at different figures because of uncertainties about the number of units, pay rate of auxiliaries, actual strength levels, number of higher ranks, inclusion or not of donatives and discharge bounties and so on; no one has yet even tried to cost supplies.⁵² In the mid-first century, when there were twenty-eight legions and probably a similar number of auxiliaries (i.e. a further 150,000 men), the theoretical annual pay bill, including the

⁵⁰ Diocletian's system: *P. Cair. Isid.* 1; *P. Panop. Beatty* 1–2.

⁵¹ The only attempt at a general survey is Wierschowski (1984); cf. Hopkins (1980) for a crude economic model. There are many regional discussions, e.g. Whittaker (1994).

⁵² Pre-AD 84, e.g. 68 million *denarii* a year, under Augustus: Frank (1940) 4–5; 59, 88 or 92 million *denarii*: Wierschowski (1984) 213; 110 million *denarii*: Hopkins (1980) 124–5; 125 million *denarii*: Duncan-Jones (1994) 33–7. Second century AD, e.g. 105 million *denarii*: MacMullen (1984b); 210 million *denarii*: Duncan-Jones (1994) 33–7. Frank, Wierschowski and MacMullen assume low pay rates for auxiliaries and omit bounties.

troops in Rome and the fleets, but excluding officers, was probably over 100 million *denarii*. Over a third of this was for the legions and roughly a half for the auxiliaries, who provided most of the cavalry. Discharge bounties for the legionaries and Rome garrison in theory required another 11 million *denarii* per annum, and for their centurions perhaps another 3 million.

In the mid-second century, after Domitian's pay-rise, with the same number of legions (thirty after AD 166), a larger garrison in Rome, and many more auxiliary units (now well over 200,000 men), the theoretical total, again excluding officers and discharge bounties (unchanged), was probably around 170 million *denarii*. The legions now accounted for under 30 per cent of the total and the auxiliaries for almost 60 per cent.⁵³ One area of great uncertainty, whose impact should be stressed, concerns the pay rates and discharge bounties of centurions and decurions. On standard assumptions, 15 per cent of the salary bill of a legion was attributable to its centurions, and the officers' salaries should also be added. The command costs, in annual pay, of the Roman army were substantial and mostly represented actual cash expenditure, unlike the salaries and bounties of ordinary troops. The Severan increases of pay and the discharge bounty, with thirty-two legions and an enlarged praetorian guard, will have roughly doubled the total pay bill. Later third-century pay is still more hazardous to estimate because of suspected structural changes such as smaller-sized units, and a larger cavalry component; it is unlikely, however, that Diocletian's army was as large as the Severan one.⁵⁴

All these estimates are only half the story because we must allow for the heavy debits made against soldiers' pay for equipment and supplies, and conversely the cost of acquiring them. Insofar as basic supplies were provided by taxation in kind the pay debits represented an important cash saving to the state, although tempered by expenditure on compulsory purchase of extra items. At a crude estimate the real peacetime cash cost of the Roman army was probably significantly less than its total theoretical pay bill. Mounting major campaigns, however, increased costs dramatically, partly because of recruiting to make up unit strengths, but mainly because of the costs of moving troops, and of acquiring and transporting the extra equipment and supplies needed. Some figures, none beyond suspicion, may indicate the scale of expenditure: in 52 BC the Senate voted Pompey 6 million *denarii* per annum to feed and equip his enormous forces; under Nero a campaign by a small force in Armenia cost 3.25 million *denarii*; the much

⁵³ Number/size of units: see pp. 71–2 above; Hassall (2000); Roth (1994). Various documents suggest that cavalry units were on average at 90 per cent strength, infantry units at 80 per cent. For pay rates, percentage of *principales*, survival to discharge, etc., see pp. 159–63 above.

⁵⁴ John Lydus, *De mensibus* 1.27 gives 389,704 men, plus 45,562 in the fleets, under Diocletian. The land forces of the mid-second century already totalled some 375,000 men, the Severan forces over 400,000.

grander Parthian expedition of Caracalla and Macrinus in 217–18 allegedly cost 50 million *denarii*. Around 170, after three years of the Marcomannic Wars, and on top of heavy civil expenditure, Marcus Aurelius had exhausted the treasury and auctioned off the palace treasures rather than impose levies on the provinces.⁵⁵

Roman sources variously claim, for their own purposes, that Roman taxation was necessary to pay the armies which brought peace, or that civilians were overtaxed to pay greedy soldiers.⁵⁶ On the whole military expenditure was met out of general imperial revenues, that is provincial taxation in cash and kind. Payments were still in theory routed through the *aerarium*, the old state treasury, although in practice units in the provinces were normally paid by the local imperial finance official (the *procurator Augusti*), under the central supervision of the emperor's finance staff (*fiscus*). There were only two exceptions. First, in AD 6 Augustus had established a separate *aerarium militare* solely to pay the discharge bounties of the legionaries out of two new revenues invented to fund it: a 5 per cent tax on significant non-familial inheritances by Roman citizens and a 1 per cent (sometimes 0.5 per cent) tax on sales by auction in Italy (i.e. mostly of property), in effect charging landowners in Italy instead of confiscating their land; in AD 17 Tiberius added the tribute of the new province of Cappadocia. Second, donatives were supposed to be paid out of the emperor's *patrimonium* ('privy purse').

In broad historical terms the Roman state had, and implemented, an ideology of low taxation, and the army was not the only call on funds. Imperial expenditure on civil administration and distributions, shows and, above all, on building works, is often greatly underestimated: two first-century aqueducts, for example, cost 87.5 million *denarii*; Domitian spent 74 million on gilding the roof of a temple.⁵⁷ The total fiscal income in the AD 70s has been estimated, very conservatively, at 200 million *denarii*; it might well have been 50 per cent greater.⁵⁸ The army was probably the single largest item of expenditure borne by the imperial treasury, though less than 50 per cent of the total. A proper estimate of the fiscal burden of the army on the Roman empire should factor in the revenues and civilian expenditure of the myriad local civic governments, which would reduce the share of military spending to 25 per cent or less.

The increases in cost between the first, second and third centuries, after stripping out price inflation, were covered by increased tax revenues as new areas were made provinces and existing provinces were developed economically. Basic tax rates remained remarkably stable through to late antiquity.

⁵⁵ Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 55.7; Plin. *HN* 7.129; Dio Cass. 78.27.1; *SHA Marc.* 17.4–5.

⁵⁶ See Rathbone (1989), (1996) for imperial finances in general.

⁵⁷ Plin. *HN* 36.122; Plut. *Vit. Publ.* 15.3.

⁵⁸ Duncan-Jones (1994) 45–6, underestimating indirect taxes. His view that in the second century the army consumed 75 per cent of cash tax revenues is implausible: what paid for everything else?

There were two types of problem: finding the hard cash to make payments due for donatives and discharge bounties, and the sudden need for resources to fund campaigns. In the third century the latter became a chronic problem, which required constant extra levies in cash and kind, provoking squeals from large landowners like Dio. The general policy in the Principate of low taxation, along with a commitment to high spending on civic amenities, severely constrained military expenditure, producing a small army with low stocks of equipment; only in crises was taxation temporarily driven by military needs.

The Roman army of the Principate is often portrayed as an agent of economic development, especially in less developed provinces. The material wants of the soldiers supposedly stimulated local agricultural and craft production, and their purchases spread the use of money (see pp. 226–31 below). The impact of the military should not be exaggerated. It accounted for less than 1 per cent of the total population of over 50 million. The million or so inhabitants of Rome, more than twice the army's size and concentrated in one place, presented a far more testing logistical challenge, and urbanization was the main motor of economic development in the provinces. However, through the participation of individual soldiers in the civilian economy, the army did help diffuse a more sophisticated model of economic behaviour. Roman soldiers of the Principate belonged to the largest salaried labour force known before the Industrial Revolution. Their lives were highly monetized; they used accounting based on paper credits and debits; they constantly borrowed and lent; they had frequent contact with civilian craftsmen, merchants and transporters; they travelled and took this behaviour with them. Tacitus derides the legionaries in peacetime Syria around AD 55 as men 'who had completed their years of service in towns as sleek businessmen'; the Egyptian and British evidence for the daily life of soldiers and veterans suggests that this was not unusual, and that one of the attractions of military service in the Principate was the private economic openings it offered.⁵⁹

B. THE MILITARY AND POLITICS

Richard Alston

The Roman political system that had sustained the city through its expansion from a small central Italian power to mastery of the Mediterranean collapsed in the two decades from Caesar crossing the Rubicon in 49 BC to Octavian's triumphal processions in 28 BC. Octavian, renamed Augustus

⁵⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 13.35; cf. Alston (1995) 102–42; Rathbone (2003); *T.Vindol.* II–III.

by a grateful Senate following his conquests in the east and the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra, laid the foundations of a new political system, the Principate, ending centuries of Republican rule.

For a century the old Republic had creaked under the pressures of a series of brutal internecine conflicts. The gang warfare that had caused the deaths of the brothers Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus escalated into military strife. Romans fought Italians (the Social War), Sulla fought Marius and Marius' supporters, the Senate crushed Lepidus, Pompey and Metellus fought Sertorius, Crassus (joined by Pompey) repressed the rebellious slaves of Spartacus, Cicero led the Senate against Catiline, Pompey was destroyed by Caesar, the triumviral successors of Caesar hunted down Caesar's assassins, Sextus Pompeius and Octavian fought a series of naval engagements, and finally Octavian and Mark Antony disputed dominance over the empire. The Republic died in a welter of civil wars.

As in all such civil conflicts a crucial role was played by soldiers who showed themselves willing to engage in their generals' political battles and to march against Rome in furtherance of political objectives. The new system of government created by Augustus transformed the military from a source of political instability and the instrument of conflict into one of the props of the new regime. Six decades of regular civil wars ushered in a period of two centuries in which, with the exception of AD 68–9, civil political conflicts did not escalate into war. This sub-chapter concentrates on this Roman revolution and the subsequent removal of the soldiery from the politics of the imperial centre.

I. THE SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICS OF THE SECOND-CENTURY BC ARMY

It has long been assumed that the army of the mid-Republic, the army that brought Italy under Roman rule and saw Rome through the first conflicts with the Carthaginians, was a citizen army, recruited from the smallholders of the Roman territories in central Italy. Most of the evidence for this army is considerably later, preserved in the annalistic tradition which comes down to us mainly through the historians of the mid- or late first century BC. Elements of the historical tradition, however, seem relatively secure. High levels of mobilization combined with brief periods of service, annual campaigns and mass conscription to produce a male population which had extensive military experience. Although conscription placed the citizen in an unusual and peculiar legal and political situation, a specific and differentiated military identity was impossible to maintain.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Smith (1958) 1–5. See also Harris (1979) 41–67, and the summary position in Hopkins (1978) 19–37, 74–5.

Although difficult to quantify, the census requirement for service in the army was very low, so that peasants who had land sufficient to provide for them at or even just below subsistence could be recruited into the army.⁶¹ There was no social, cultural or economic difference between the Roman citizens and the Roman soldiery that could form the basis of the formation of a separate military identity. Such peasant soldiers came to be romanticized in later traditions as the backbone of the Roman army on whose prowess Rome survived the Hannibalic conflict and became great, but also as a repository of traditional Roman values, a moral touchstone for the Republican state.⁶²

One of the best examples of such romanticization comes with the story of Spurius Ligustinus. In 171 BC this small farmer with many years of military service reputedly shamed other former centurions who wished to retain their rank in the new army into ceasing their protest and allowing the levy to proceed (Livy 32.34). Oddly, this same army needed a very similar patriotic education on its return four years later, when the soldiers moved to reject Paullus' triumph for his victory in Macedonia, probably because of discontent at his disciplinarian character. They were checked only by the intervention of a number of leading senators, among them Marcus Servilius, who gave a very long speech which culminated in a nude display of his battle scars and a call to the Romans to display similarly old-fashioned virtues (Livy 45.35–9). In both cases there is an explicit contrast between the unruly soldiers of contemporary Rome who opposed their generals, and those who endured the *antiqua disciplina* of an earlier age. Moral decline was already presented as a feature of the Roman army even before extensive contact with the notoriously immoral and wealthy east (Sall. *Cat.* 11).

Whatever the historical realities that lay behind these two figures and speeches, such stories provide evidence of an emerging structural differentiation between soldiers and civilians. The soldiery of the mid-second century are depicted acting as a political unit, with specific political interests and policies (even if negative in this case), suggesting that soldiers operated as a differentiated sub-group within Roman society. Such political activism, however, is a feature of very particular circumstances and, of course, relates to the actions of a single army. One may presume that other armies would have had no interest in Paullus' triumph. Nevertheless, the politicization of this army was not unique. The Scipiones had a particular rapport with the soldiers and, later, soldiers may have been crucial in elevating Marius to the first of his consulships and to command in the war against Jugurtha.⁶³

⁶¹ Rathbone (1993a). ⁶² Woolf (1990) 197–228. See also Ando (2002).

⁶³ Sall. *Iug.* 41; see Astin (1989). See also Astin (1967), (1978) for the politics of the second century BC.

These armies show some of the characteristics conventionally associated with the post-Marian army.⁶⁴

The literary evidence suggests that Italy in the late second century BC was undergoing a political and economic crisis, which we tend to associate with the Gracchan reforms.⁶⁵ The traditional Roman peasant is depicted as poor, and the area of land granted to men who joined the colonies of the early and mid-Republic was tiny, often merely 7 *iugera*, barely enough to support a family. It seems likely that those farming such plots would need additional paid work to supplement household income.⁶⁶ Such plots are not readily identified in the archaeological record, perhaps because the level of material culture that such peasants would enjoy would be so poor that it would be unlikely to leave sufficient traces to allow their shelters to be detected (see pp. 200–5 below).

Archaeologists, however, have been very successful in uncovering the settlement patterns and agricultural regimes of Italy in this period through methodical field survey. Such surveys have produced surprising results, demonstrating conclusively that economic developments in, and the subsequent settlement patterns of, the various regions of Italy show a marked lack of homogeneity. Some areas appear to show a decline in the density of settlement in the late second century and early first, but many others show the second century to be an era of unprecedented density of settlement.⁶⁷ The overwhelming conclusion to be drawn from the archaeological evidence is that Italy, with certain exceptions, was very densely settled in the last two centuries BC.⁶⁸

Settlements identified by field survey and later excavated have tended not to be small peasant cottages, but rather larger, often well-built, houses with considerable evidence of storage and food-processing equipment. Some of these farms were quite small, but still represented a considerable investment of capital, rather more than might be expected of small peasant landowners.⁶⁹ It is possible that such farms were worked by tenant farmers, the farm buildings themselves being constructed by the landlord.⁷⁰ The gradual commercialization of at least some Italian farming and perceptible growth in villa estates may well have led to the dislocation of some traditional agriculturalists, though it probably provided a much-needed source of income

⁶⁴ For the debate on whether the Marian reforms transformed the political role of the army see Smith (1958); Harmand (1967); Harmand (1969) esp. 61–73; Nicolet (1980) esp. 92–3. Gabba (1976a) reacts against this traditional model.

⁶⁵ Plut. *Vit. Ti. Gracch.* 8.7; App. *B Civ.* 1.7–8, with discussion in Patterson (1987). See also Champlin (1981); Cornell (1996a) 97–117.

⁶⁶ Evans (1980).

⁶⁷ See for instance, Crawford (1980); Crawford et al. (1986); Wightman (1981) 275–87; Pasquinucci and Menchelli (1999); Voorrips et al. (1991); Sallares (1999); Barker (1995).

⁶⁸ See summaries in Potter (1979) 95–6; Rathbone (1981), restated in Rathbone (1993b).

⁶⁹ De Boe (1975); Alwyn Cotton and Métraux (1985); Gazzetti (1995). ⁷⁰ Foxhall (1990).

for some. Labour in agriculture is seasonal, and although some needs might have been met by slaves from the newly conquered territories it would have been uneconomic to buy and support a slave for a year just for three weeks of labour during harvest. Nevertheless, service in the Roman army almost certainly remained a major and possibly crucial source of additional income for these archaeologically almost invisible Italian smallholders.

Marius, as consul, recruited men with little or no property into the army which, it has been argued, created a professionalized force. This army developed an *esprit de corps* and, isolated from conventional Roman *mores*, the men were guided by their need for financial security on discharge, which could easily produce greed and unwavering support for their generals. Yet the willingness of the earlier Roman population to be conscripted in such numbers and to engage in the long succession of wars that marked Rome's rise to domination was probably due to the poverty of those peasants who formed the backbone of the army.⁷¹ The Marian abolition of the census requirement was the culmination of a long process of diminution of the required census level for military service (see vol. 1, pp. 494–7). Dropping the property qualification merely opened service to yet another sector of the population who needed the financial support, and may reflect Marius' populism or perhaps a desire to make some provision for the propertyless underclasses of Roman society. There was probably virtually no economic or sociological distinction between the soldiery of the mid-second century and those recruited by Marius.⁷² The Marian reforms did not mark a sea-change in the political nature of the army.

II. THE CRISIS OF THE REPUBLIC

The army of the first century BC took an increasingly important role in Roman politics. Marius was asked by the Senate to use troops against Saturninus, the man who had secured a colonization programme from which his troops might have expected to benefit. The soldiers followed Marius' commands and crushed Saturninus and his supporters. This was an extreme military intervention in politics for which there was little historical precedent, and could be represented as an escalation of the political strife in the city of Rome, even though it had the support of the traditional oligarchy of the city. We cannot reconstruct the political rationale that drove the soldiers' actions. They may have assumed that Marius and the Senate were the true guarantors of their land settlement, or may simply have followed their commander blindly.

The most obvious break with precedent, however, came in 88 BC with the First Civil War. Sulla had been removed from his command against

⁷¹ Harris (1979) 41–67; 101–4.

⁷² Rich (1983); Rathbone (1993a).

Mithridates by a riotous assembly in Rome. He returned to his army and persuaded them to march on Rome to remove his political opponents. The troops, who had possibly already served with Sulla during the Social War, were prepared to follow him. Their officers deserted. Sulla's troops, expecting to be sent on a potentially lucrative campaign against Mithridates in the east, may have felt that they would be replaced by Marian legionaries, and thus they themselves had an interest in the coup (App. *B Civ.* 1.57). The officers, however, appear to have had finer feelings and could not associate themselves with this assault on the city. Five years later, when Sulla returned from the east and embarked on the far bloodier civil war of 83–82 BC, he won significant and perhaps crucial support from the political class (App. *B Civ.* 1.84–96). In 88 BC the soldiers were either uninterested or unconcerned by the legitimacy of the regime in Rome and were prepared to act against it, while their officers were not. In 83–82 BC many more of the élite agreed with Sulla's soldiers. This was not merely a military coup, but a general crisis of legitimacy in Roman politics.

Polybius (6.11–18), writing for a Greek audience, described the Roman constitution as mixed, containing elements of monarchy (the consuls), oligarchy (the Senate) and democracy (the popular assemblies), but he ascribed most power to the popular assemblies. Millar has urged us to take this passage seriously, pointing to moments when the crowd appears to take a dominant role in Roman politics, overturning political convention.⁷³ Nevertheless not only was one of the more important assemblies heavily weighted towards the wealthy but participation levels in the electoral and legislative processes are uncertain. Electoral and legislative assemblies required the physical participation of the people which, as Roman territory spread (especially after the Social War) must have required significant journeys to Rome and perhaps a stay of several days. It seems very likely that few of the 300,000 registered citizens of the second century and even fewer of the c. 1,000,000 of the first century would actually vote. The electoral machinery of Rome was not sufficiently sophisticated to cope with more than a small proportion of the citizen body.⁷⁴

Given that the population of Rome itself may have had its electoral power limited by being registered mainly in four of the thirty-two tribal units, the democracy was probably far from representative. Comparatively small assemblies were, however, manageable, capable of being 'packed' by members of the élite who could 'bring in' a vote by using urban and rural dependants. Such a managed democracy may have appealed to the aristocratic Polybius.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, although ensuring a certain political stability the managed assemblies had certain faults. First, small special interest groups

⁷³ Millar (1984b), (1986), (1989), (1995), (1998). ⁷⁴ Mouritsen (2001) 18–37.

⁷⁵ Vishnia (1996).

(such as clients of senators) could capture the democracy. This appears to have happened with the Macedonian army which, though a comparatively small element of the citizenry, was able to control an assembly. Significantly, the complaint of the oligarchs in this case was not against the 'unconstitutional' or undemocratic dominance of the assembly, but the use of that assembly to attack traditional senatorial authority.

More dangerously, genuinely popular politicians such as the Gracchi, even without majority support, could establish overwhelming control of the assembly, sweeping aside the oligarchs' 'machine politics'.⁷⁶ The Gracchi were broken by force, but they had shown other politicians of the second and first centuries a route to power. In many modern states democracy has been seen as the best way of achieving political consensus. Yet a democracy that empowers only a small proportion of the population risks not achieving that legitimacy. In the last century of the Republic the pervasive use of violence to control the assembly by all sides in political arguments (in itself evidence of comparatively low levels of political participation) must have further weakened the legitimacy of the political system.

The weight of tradition and the accumulated success of the Roman political élite over the previous centuries were potentially powerful means of securing the support of conservative Romans. One could guess that it was this traditionalism that led to the defection of the officers from Sulla's army in 88 BC. The Marians were not, however, able to achieve legitimacy in Sulla's absence, and the political dynamics changed. After Sulla the use of soldiers in political battles was still a radical step, and one that came at a political cost, but it was not in itself revolutionary. The military interventions of the first century were justified in terms that suggested that the generals were attempting to defend the Roman state against special interest groups that threatened to seize power. Caesar fought Pompey for the rights of the tribunes and against the tyranny of a faction, while Pompey fought for the Senate. The conspirators killed Caesar and fought the Caesarians for the liberty of the Republic, and the triumvirs fought the assassins to restore the Republic, threatened by the tyranny of a faction. Antony claimed that he wished to restore the Republic, but was prevented from so doing by Octavian who was, in turn, to restore the same Republic on his return from Actium.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Plut. *Vit. Ti. Gracch.* 20 suggests that Gracchus had 3,000–4,000 followers, but the veracity of such numbers is impossible to establish.

⁷⁷ Suet. *Aug.* 28.1; coinage proclaims Octavian in 28 BC to be Imp. Caesar Divi F Cos vi Libertatis P R Vindex (The General Caesar, son of the deified, Consul six times, defender of the liberty of the Roman people) (*Roman Imperial Coinage*, 476); *Res Gestae* 1: 'At the age of nineteen on my own responsibility and at my own expense I raised an army, with which I successfully championed the liberty of the republic when it was oppressed by the tyranny of a faction.'

However tenuous the ancient reasoning, such rhetoric defined the issues of political dispute by which each side sought to achieve support, and the similarity of the claims demonstrates at least a shared set of rhetorical values and a high political valuation of the Republic. Nevertheless there was only a limited consensus as to what constituted that Republic. For some it was the power of the magistrates and the prerogatives of the Senate, while for others the Republic defended the liberty of the individual and the community of citizens. In rhetorical terms there was little difference between Caesar's invasion of Italy to protect his *dignitas*, his right to be great without the supervision of Pompey and his supporters, and the conspirators, whose *libertas* was offended by the rule of Caesar (*B Civ.* 1.22.5). The extent to which such rhetoric was directed at the political élite and ignored by other social groups, including the soldiers, cannot be established. The soldiers of the first century, however, recruited from an Italy recently and bloodily unified, were unlikely to be swayed by a tradition of subservience to a senatorial elite, or an emotional attachment to Rome, especially when they saw the political spoils distributed through violence or threat of violence, corruption and the machinations of a politically remote élite.

III. THE POLITICAL MOBILIZATION OF THE ROMAN SOLDIER

We know very little about the social origins of Roman armies. Significantly, we have little epigraphic evidence for the Roman army before the Augustan period, and we are forced to rely on the literary material. Such material tends to obscure sociological problems, such as the origins of the soldiery. In a few cases it seems likely that armies were raised from particular localities. Pompey raised troops to support Sulla's second march on Rome from the region with which his family had a special relationship and it seems possible that it was these soldiers who formed the basis of Pompey's army in Spain.⁷⁸ Caesar's rapid advance into Italy in 49 BC may have been not just a demonstration of his famous *celeritas*, but also an attempt to separate Pompey from his recruiting grounds (*Caes. B Civ.* 1.15). Scipio Aemilianus levied troops from his supporters for his campaign in Spain, but it is not clear whether these troops had a particular sociological or geographical origin.⁷⁹ However usual or unusual such focused recruitment may have been, long service with a particular general offered opportunities for the formation of a close political relationship with that general and for welding the inevitably disparate elements of a new army into a more homogeneous political and military unit.

⁷⁸ App. *B Civ.* 1.80, 1.190. Given the chaos of the period, it is possible that Pompey's troops were those most easily available to the Senate and this is why they were sent.

⁷⁹ Rich (1983).

Soldiers and general were inevitably dependent on each other, and that relationship could continue beyond the period of actual service. The general could offer soldiers money for continued political support, but land appears to have been a more popular gift.⁸⁰ The power of colonization programmes was discovered in the second century. One of the fears aroused by the Gracchan colonization programme was that it gave institutional support to the Gracchan faction which could be easily mobilized thereafter. Marian colonists were crucial in the restoration of the Marian faction following Sulla's march on Rome, a political lesson which Sulla appears to have learnt (Sall. *B Cat.* 16 4, 28.4).

The most aggressive use of colonies, however, came at the end of the Republic. Caesar helped Pompey establish colonies for the Pompeian legions returned from the east, a move which bound Pompey and Caesar's political futures together. Caesar's enemies could hardly attack his actions as consul, including securing himself the powerful Gallic province, without also questioning his land bill and bringing Pompey back into the political fray to support his troops.⁸¹ Crucially Pompey's troops were stationed in Italy, and he was able to call upon them to establish his power in Rome after the murder of Clodius and to demonstrate to the senators their need for a strong man to preserve order and, later, to threaten Caesar.⁸² In turn Caesar's veterans were roused from their new colonies to avenge the dead dictator in 49 BC, and provided at least some of the troops that launched Octavian on his career. Octavian later resettled troops after the defeat of the conspirators, earning himself both unpopularity with the displaced Italian population and also the hostility of Antonians who regarded the settlement, correctly, as establishing an independent power base.⁸³

However, the soldiers themselves were more than mere playthings whose support was bought and used by their generals as the latter desired. Some generals found winning the political support of their troops very difficult.⁸⁴ Moreover, the soldiers pursued their own political agendas. Even Caesar found his soldiers mutinous during the civil wars when not provided with the rewards they felt they had been promised.⁸⁵ After Caesar's murder the Caesarian legions had a clear interest in avenging their former patron (since this would secure his land settlements), but this did not translate into uncritical backing for any of the various contenders for Caesar's mantle.

⁸⁰ On this issue, see Brunt (1962).

⁸¹ Cicero raised the issue of the Campanian land settlements with disastrous results for his political position. See *De provinciis consularibus* with the background provided from *Fam.* 1.9.8–10.

⁸² For a summary narrative account, see Gruen (1974) 150–5.

⁸³ Keppie (1983), App. *B Civ.* 5.12–14; Dio Cass. 48.6–7. For the unpopularity of the settlements, see, for example, Verg. *Ecl.* 1.70–8, 9; Prop. 1.21–2. Also Gowing (1992) 77–84.

⁸⁴ Perhaps the best example is provided by Lucullus in the east, Plut. *Vit. Luc.* 24; 32–6.

⁸⁵ Chrissanthos (2001).

The veterans were unwilling to back Octavian's attempted coup against Antony in 44 BC and also refused to fight fellow Caesarians when Octavian and Antony confronted each other at Brundisium in 40 BC (App. *B Civ.* 3.40–8, 5.59–65). Similarly, the third member of the triumvirate, Lepidus, twice found that the troops under his command were more loyal to Caesar's heirs than him – when prevaricating as to whether to support Antony or destroy him after Antony's defeat at Mutina, and later when confronting Octavian in Sicily. On both occasions Lepidus went to sleep commander of an army and woke to find that his troops had made all the decisions for him (App. *B Civ.* 3.83, 5.123–6).

It is no coincidence that it is in this period that we begin to have an epigraphic record of soldiers and their colonies. Caesar's soldiers, and especially their immediate successors, caught the growing epigraphic habit and identified themselves as soldiers and veterans in death and in benefactions.⁸⁶ Their identity was bound up with their military service. Unlike Spurius Ligustinus, for whom soldiers were simply citizens in arms, by the 40s BC being a soldier was to lay claim to a particular and unusual status.

The particularity of the soldiers was emphasized by the clashes at the end of the Republic. Soldiers profited from the civil wars at the expense of the Italian population. The great colonization programmes after the civil wars established new communities and displaced an unknown but possibly significant proportion of Italian farmers. Soldiers fought Italians for these lands. If I am correct in assuming that soldiering was a means of survival for an extremely poor social stratum of Italian society, then many of the soldiers had an overwhelming interest in winning sufficient land to ensure their security and relative prosperity. The army was their 'meal-ticket' while they served, and the political power of the colonists acted as a guarantor of their prosperity when they retired. For such reasons, the soldiers had an interest in retaining their social separation from civilian society before and beyond discharge, and the mobilization of their political interests was a crucial factor in the destabilization and eventual collapse of the Republic (see pp. 208–11 below).

IV. THE AUGUSTAN SETTLEMENT

The collapse of the Republican state left a void that was filled by the rival generals. Caesar failed to secure his position. His dictatorship failed to legitimate his authority, and at his death in March 44 he was about to launch an ambitious campaign to the east, a venture which may have been calculated to win him further prestige and political support and hence justify his power in Rome. The triumvirs ruled by diktat backed by military

⁸⁶ Keppie (1977).

force and it was, presumably, an option for Octavian to maintain his rule through the same means after 30 BC. Nevertheless, the new master of Rome embarked on a policy seemingly designed to secure his legitimacy and establish a political consensus in support of his new regime. In 28–27, he restored the Republic through a variety of measures which culminated in a constitutional debate in January 27 BC which later historians have identified as the first constitutional settlement.⁸⁷

As a result of this debate, Octavian acquired the name Augustus, was given authority over a large number of provinces and consequently control over most of the armies active within Roman territory, and was confirmed in his consulship, which he held repeatedly until 23 BC. The settlement changed the way in which Augustus presented his relationship to the military. Suetonius (*Aug.* 25) tells us that he no longer addressed the troops as *commilitones* (comrades), showing himself to be their commander, appointed by the Senate, and not their colleague in a political and revolutionary adventure. This was not, however, a civilianization of government. The military remained a significant pillar upholding his political position. Nor was this reliance on the military hidden. The dichotomy that has existed in some liberal states between legitimate civilian government and illegal military regimes was not part of Augustan ideology. Augustus celebrated his military prowess, displayed his connection to the soldiers and arguably justified his pre-eminence largely on the basis of his role as military leader.

Augustus reshaped the political heart of Rome. The forum was decorated with reminders of his triumphs over Antony, Sextus Pompeius and the killers of Caesar.⁸⁸ The most significant new building was the temple of the deified Julius, which adorned one end of the forum. Either in 28 BC or a decade later, the temple came to be flanked by a triumphal arch.⁸⁹ A series of bronze columns made from the prows of Sextus Pompeius' ships stood prominently in the centre of the forum, and a new rostrum was built displaying the beaks of ships taken at Actium. In so doing, Augustus mimicked the ancient triumphal monuments of Roman history and represented his victories as being of similarly historic importance.

Sculptural references to naval victory adorned various temples, but most pointed was the installation of an ancient statue of victory in the Julian senate house, so that the senators would meet under a symbol of a military success that could be seen as ensuring their political subservience. Above the forum stood the gleaming temple of Palatine Apollo, the god whom Augustus proclaimed as being particularly responsible for his military triumphs. The temple formed a single complex with Augustus' house.⁹⁰ In

⁸⁷ See most recently and fully, Rich and Williams (1999).

⁸⁸ For what follows, see Zanker (1988) 79–89.

⁸⁹ Rich (1998); Kleiner (1988); Wallace-Hadrill (1990); Gurval (1995) 36–47; Scott (2000).

⁹⁰ Carattoni (1983); Dio Cass. 53.16.4–5; Suet. *Aug.* 29.3; Prop. 2.31.

due course he constructed a new forum in which he celebrated military success. The centrepiece of this forum was a huge temple to Mars Ultor, Mars the Avenger, making reference to Octavian's avenging of the murder of Caesar. The forum was flanked by a sequence of statues which recalled the mythological origins of Rome, and also commemorated those generals who had been responsible for the expansion of Roman power. Many of the statues had *tituli* which described their contributions to the Roman state. The forum was thus a textual and sculptural representation of Rome's imperial history, dominated by the temple of Mars, both a mythical forefather of the Roman people and the god of war.⁹¹ Augustus' own contribution was marked by a central statue of the emperor which proclaimed him as father of his country.⁹² Augustus could be seen as the culmination of the military history of the state in this, the largest monument of Augustan Rome.⁹³

Augustus established the Roman soldiery on new terms of service. The legions left to him after the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra were discharged or amalgamated to produce an army of twenty-eight legions which were then stationed across the empire (see pp. 35–7 above). Although many earlier Roman armies had spent long periods in the field, the fiction that they were required for but a single campaign had been maintained. Augustus, however, used his army in a different way. The early Augustan period saw unprecedented expansion, with wars in Spain and expansion into the Alpine region and Germany, towards the Danube, to the south of Egypt and a diplomatic-military triumph in Parthia.⁹⁴ Continual military activity justified the necessity of Augustus' control over such a large army. Yet continuous danger also meant that the soldiers remained in service, as there was no reason to disband the legions. Gradually, and perhaps more by accident than design, Augustus created a standing army. He also had to establish a legal framework to define the status of these citizens, now removed from Italy and Rome, and to procure rewards for the soldiers on discharge.⁹⁵ Much of the financial infrastructure required to support these rewards only emerged progressively during Augustus' reign, normally at moments of crisis when substantial numbers of troops became eligible for discharge (see pp. 162–3 above).⁹⁶

This new army was not just paid for and regulated by Augustus, it was also commanded by him or his close allies. He initially shared military responsibilities with Agrippa, who was responsible for much of

⁹¹ Luce (1990); *Ov. Fast.* 5.550–98.

⁹² *Ov. Fast.* 5.551–66; *Suet. Aug.* 29, 31; Zanker (1988), 108, 113–14, 129, 194–5, 210–15.

⁹³ Nicolet (1991) 15–27, 95–122.

⁹⁴ Gruen (1990) 395–416; Wells (1972).

⁹⁵ *Suet. Aug.* 49. Wells (1989 [1998]) and also Phang (2001) 344–83.

⁹⁶ Dio Cass. 54.25 suggests that Augustus had problems with his troops in 13 BC, roughly sixteen years after the post-Actium settlement. The normal limit of service during the Republic appears to have been sixteen years. Augustus set terms of service for the praetorians at this stage. Roughly a military generation later, Dio Cass. 55.23, 55.25 and *Res Gestae* 17.2 for AD 5 and 6 attest further institutionalizing of the army's finances.

Augustus' early success, but with the adulthood of Tiberius and Drusus, sons of Augustus' wife, he was able to use two more generals to launch ambitious campaigns into Germany. The death of Drusus and the temporary retreat from office of Tiberius caused a pause in Roman military activity, but following Tiberius' return to favour, campaigning resumed along the Danube and in Germany. In AD 14 when Tiberius acceded to the throne, the young Germanicus was emerging as the next leading general. Military glory came to be monopolized by the imperial family.

The intention of the Augustan settlement seems clear. Augustus wished to maintain a relationship with the soldiers who had brought him to power. In so doing he both institutionalized his own power over the army and effectively created a standing army whose loyalty to the imperial family could be sustained over a long period. Only the most trusted friends or family members were allowed to act as intermediaries between the army and emperor, restricting access to that most powerful of political weapons, the troops. Furthermore, Augustus was able to control access to military prestige. This was not covert. Augustus used his relationship with the military as a major part of his self-presentation to the people of Rome and to that group whom one might expect to be most hostile to his monarchic tendencies, the senators. It can hardly be coincidental that Augustus's greatest military and diplomatic triumph, in 20 BC, forcing the Parthians to surrender the standards captured at Carrhae, brought an end to a period in which Augustus was under political pressure with conspiracies, problematic trials and changes in his legal authority, and led to a new and confident political period in which he embarked on a programme of religious and moral renewal centred around the declaration of a new Golden Age, which was celebrated by poets loyal to the regime.⁹⁷ The military was a pillar of the Augustan regime, and military success reinforced the legitimacy of that regime in a way rather more radical than that used by the generals of the Republic to boost their prestige.

Much of the political impact of the military in the Augustan period was at the level of symbolism. After 30 BC Augustus did not have to call on the loyalty of the troops in civil war, and it is only with Claudius that we see the first major test of the loyalty of the troops to the imperial regime. Judging the attitudes of the individual soldiers is, therefore, difficult. The Augustan colonization programme continued that of the triumviral period, and Augustus appears to have visited colonies and shown generosity to the settlers even after the immediate settlement period.⁹⁸ The continued appearance of military tombstones suggests that the soldiery continued to portray themselves as a class apart, thus justifying and asserting a particular

⁹⁷ Dio Cass. 54.10; *Res Gestae* 6; Dio Cass. 54.16, 54.18; Hor. *Carm. saec.*

⁹⁸ Suet. *Aug.* 56–7; Keppie (1983) 112–27; *Res Gestae* 15–16, 28.

claim on privilege. A triumviral decree preserved in Egypt suggests that soldiers were granted a number of privileges in relation to taxation and the legal status of their families, signifying Augustus' desire to be seen to be supporting his troops.⁹⁹ One would expect, therefore, that Augustus' implicit claim to be a leader at the head of a loyal army had some veracity, and that troops identified their interests as being with the emperor.

This mutually supportive relationship collapsed at the end of the reign, the problems surfacing in the mutinies of AD 14. Notably, the mutineers identified a moment of political weakness in the regime, either because their loyalty to the old emperor made rebellion against him impossible or because the inevitable insecurity of a new emperor seemed to allow the option of a political choice or an opportunity to press demands (Tac. *Ann.* 1.16–49). Those demands related to the collapse of the Augustan military administration, probably under the strains placed upon it by the Pannonian revolt and the subsequent slaughter of three legions in the Teutoburger Wald (see p. 142 above).¹⁰⁰ The soldiers of the German and Danubian armies complained that they were retained in service beyond their legal term, that their pay was often embezzled by their officers, that their duties were violently and corruptly enforced and that their pay was too low. The German armies offered to ally with Germanicus to raise him to the throne, presumably on the understanding that their demands would then be met. Such complaints in fact demonstrate the political failure of the soldiers rather than their strength, since a politically rampant soldiery would hardly have suffered the indignities forced upon them at the end of the Augustan period. Nevertheless, the mutinies of AD 14 showed that the soldiers' power was merely controlled, and certainly not dispelled.

V. THE POLITICS OF THE EARLY IMPERIAL ARMY

Generalizing about the politics of the Julio-Claudian dynasty is rendered difficult by the distinctive and often rather peculiar styles of government adopted by the various emperors of the dynasty. The military remained of political importance, but each emperor used military imagery and his relationship with the soldiery in different ways. Tiberius was the only emperor of this dynasty after Augustus who had any military experience on his accession. He was also the most pacific of emperors when in power, and this can hardly be coincidental. Although this policy ensured that none could rival his military experience and status it also meant that he could not use military success to bolster his political position. Germanicus had been allowed considerable freedom in his war in Germany and was then sent east,

⁹⁹ *BGU* II 628 = *CPapLat* 103 = *W Chrest* 462; Alston (1995) 217.

¹⁰⁰ Dio Cass. 56.18–25; Vell. Pat. 2.117–22; Schlüter (1999).

possibly with a view to a military campaign against the Parthians, but the relationship between Germanicus and Tiberius has been so blurred by the events surrounding the death of Germanicus, and the subsequent general hostility towards Tiberius, that it is difficult to assess whether Tiberius had intended Germanicus to take an active military role in the region.

Even after Germanicus' death had robbed Tiberius of a potential general, he still had the option of promoting his natural son Drusus, but did not do so. The frontier army became marginal to Tiberius' self-representation, as the emperor concentrated on his relationship with the Senate. Yet Tiberius made very obvious use of the praetorian guard, concentrating the praetorian cohorts in Rome under the command of a single individual, Sejanus, and elevating that individual to the status of a primary advisor and political manager for the emperor (see pp. 46–7 above). Even before Sejanus rose to prominence, if Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.7) is to be believed and is not just foreshadowing the prefect's rise, Tiberius' first acts as emperor were to secure the loyalty of the praetorians and to appear in Rome accompanied by the guard. Such obvious reliance on the military, while deferring to the Senate, probably contributed to the confusion that seems to have characterized Tiberius' relations with senators.

Gaius and Claudius both took care early in their reigns to seek military prestige and to associate themselves with the troops, Claudius with rather more success than Gaius. Claudius' military adventures acknowledged his reliance on the troops. His accession had been made possible by the support of praetorians who first found and saved him from possible assassination, then were instrumental in his elevation to the purple. It was a debt that Claudius acknowledged and, at moments of crisis, such as at the fall of Messalina, he returned to the praetorian camp.¹⁰¹ His accession was also marred by a conspiracy led by a certain Scribonianus who attempted to use the Dalmatian legions under his command against Claudius. At the last moment, however, the legions refused to move against the emperor and Scribonianus and his associates were arrested and transported to Rome.¹⁰² Claudius almost immediately launched the conquest of Britain and then heavily publicized his victories with monuments in Britain, Gaul and Rome, and by celebrating a triumph in the city.¹⁰³

With the exception of the brief British campaign and Gaius' rather odd expedition to Gaul, the Julio-Claudian emperors did not personally undertake campaigns. Indeed, it was not until Domitian that we again see an emperor actively campaigning. Claudius and Nero were content to allow others, notably Corbulo, to do their fighting for them (see pp. 10–11

¹⁰¹ Tac. *Ann.* 11.35. For an *aurous* of Claudius celebrating the loyalty of the praetorians, see Mattingly (1923) 165 (no. 15), 166 (no. 8).

¹⁰² Tac. *Hist.* 1.89; Suet. *Claud.* 13; Dio Cass. 60.15–16; Plin. *Ep.* 3.16.

¹⁰³ Mattingly (1923), 168 (no. 29); *ILS* 213, 216, 217; Tac. *Ann.* 12.36–8.

above), winning a reputation for administrative efficiency in dealing with war rather than associating themselves directly with the troops. Gaius, with his emphasis on divinity, and Nero, with an emphasis on cultural excellence, used different means of establishing their legitimacy. The army became increasingly marginal to politics.

The crisis of AD 68–70 again saw a period of civil war in which military support was crucial. The fall of Nero was sparked by the revolt of an obscure Gallic governor, Vindex, which appears to have set off a chain of events which meant that Nero's position disintegrated with remarkable rapidity. Unfortunately, we do not have the last sections of Tacitus' *Annales* which would have provided the political background to these events. Although Nero's enemies were in the gubernatorial class rather than among the soldiers, Tacitus gives the soldiers a crucial role in the fall of Galba, who failed to win the support of any significant military group and fell to the praetorians, encouraged by Otho. Vitellius is also supposed to have acted only when the soldiers rioted, though one wonders whether the portrayal of the emperor as indolent encouraged the historian towards this reading. Soldiers disgruntled at their treatment or at the rise of other armies appear to have been instrumental in the wars; Vitellius' troops were annoyed that Galba had honoured Vindex, whose revolt they had crushed, and later the Danubian legions, who would win the crucial victories for Vespasian, were aggrieved since they had arrived too late to support Otho and had been sent away. The civil wars themselves were a crisis of legitimacy. Nero held the throne by hereditary right, but Galba, Otho, Vitellius and, finally, Vespasian were powerful primarily because of their armies, and were thus open to challenge from any who felt that their right or ability to rule was equivalent.

The military continued to be politically significant, but its changed importance can be seen in the way in which generals treated the troops. Roman generals could be divided into two stereotypes: the indulgent commanders suspected for currying favour with the troops and encouraging indiscipline and the martinets, such as Corbulo, who restored discipline to the slack troops (Tac. *Ann.* 13.35). Forced marches, ferocious discipline and a fondness for 'old-fashioned' values marked these men. Yet the old-fashioned discipline meted out by men such as Corbulo, Galba and Piso looked back to a very remote age.¹⁰⁴ The Roman citizen-soldier had never been without rights during the Republic, and it seems unlikely that Republican generals would have ruled with such severity. Severity was a mark of the soldiers' lack of political power; it was a gesture to a different political audience, a display of authority over social inferiors calculated to impress the conservative political élite of Rome. What mattered in the politics of imperial Rome was not the political support of the soldiery, but to demonstrate

¹⁰⁴ Tac. *Hist.* 1.18; Sen. *De ira* 1.18.3–6.

competence to the emperor and to the political élite, for it was that competence and trustworthiness that would secure further advancement. Remote from Rome, without an obvious impact on imperial politics, the attitudes of the soldiers themselves were mostly irrelevant. In normal circumstances, the emperor did not depend on his soldiers and commanders could afford to treat soldiers harshly. Should the soldiers gain political power, as they did temporarily in 68–70, such harshness doomed the commander.

Domitian and Trajan associated with the army much more closely than their predecessors, yet the same factors apply. The army was a potential prop for Domitian's regime, and his increase in military pay and campaigns in Germany and along the Danube appear to resurrect the military monarchy. Yet the army was too remote from Rome to ensure Domitian's political survival. Our universally eulogistic sources on Trajan make it rather difficult to find a balanced view of his reign. Unsurprisingly, Pliny's *Panegyricus* celebrates his military triumphs and does not suggest that Trajan was a military dictator, reliant on the troops to sustain his rule. Trajan spent much of his reign on campaign and thus away from Rome, and this perhaps eased potential tensions between the general and senators. The enormous victory monuments in Rome would seem to suggest that he wished to display and emphasize his military prowess in Rome, but even if Trajan and Domitian could be seen as partially returning to the military monarchism of a century earlier, this was not a form of the imperial position that came to dominate. The post-Augustan monarchy appears to marginalize the troops, though promoting military success as an attribute of the monarch. The soldiers were not at the political heart of the Principate (see pp. 211–15 below).

VI. THE PROVINCIAL SOLDIERS

The relationship between the soldiers of the Roman imperial army and provincials was complex and, at times, difficult (see pp. 215–31 below). The epigraphic record, especially the funerary inscriptions, shows that soldiers remained a distinct social group, structurally differentiated from the rest of society, who celebrated their elevated status in death either as soldiers or veterans. No other professional group appears so distinctly within the epigraphic record.¹⁰⁵ It is not hard to find examples of soldiers accused of corrupt dealings, and the braggart, bullying soldier was almost a literary convention for the period.¹⁰⁶ From Judaea to Britain, in documentary evidence and poetry, the rapacious soldiery appear to tyrannize local populations.

The welfare of the soldiers was of obvious concern to emperors eager to be shown as the soldiers' friend and to have a happy, healthy and well-staffed

¹⁰⁵ Hope (2001).

¹⁰⁶ Petron. *Sat.* 82; Apul. *Met.* 9.39–42; Luke 3.14; Epictetus, *Discourses* 4.1.79; Juv. *Satires* 16.

military establishment. Privileges, such as having cases against them heard in camp and enjoying certain immunities from civic duties and taxation, may have been calculated to avoid soldiers being drawn away from camp. Other privileges, such as those concerning wills (which did not have to conform to the normal complex Roman rules of inheritance) and marriage (allowed with non-Romans), may have ameliorated the legal disadvantages faced by soldiers serving away from home for a substantial part of a lifetime. Nevertheless they were also gestures of imperial favour.¹⁰⁷

Soldiers also had some ill-defined rights to demand services from local populations when passing through or billeting in an area, and these were clearly of immense practical value.¹⁰⁸ Such powers, together with the soldiers' ability to wield violence, were open to abuse, and there can be little doubt that soldiers were often corrupt. Their closer proximity to the centres of political and judicial power, and their greater familiarity with the workings of the administration, probably meant that soldiers were difficult to bring to justice, and if there was a suspicion that the commander or the judicial official tended to indulge the wayward tendencies of his troops or even benefit from the loot flowing into the camp, then forgiveness may have been a more advisable policy than prosecution (see pp. 217–19 below).

Roman soldiers were in a powerful position in provincial society. They were representatives of the Roman state, and attacking a soldier could be seen as an act of rebellion. In Egypt we have a very large number of petitions from villagers asking local centurions to intervene in matters mostly relating to public order and security. The documentary material from Egypt is far richer than from elsewhere, but inscriptions from other provinces suggest that centurions may have performed similar functions across the empire.¹⁰⁹ In Egypt the centurion was a symbol of Roman order and was closely connected to the political networks of Roman administration. Although there is no definitive documentary evidence it is a reasonable assumption that these centurions were sometimes accompanied by soldiers – some surviving duty rosters do show soldiers on extended duty away from camps with centurions.¹¹⁰

Nevertheless the situation was probably not uniform across the empire. In a hostile province such as Britain in the 60s AD, with an ill-formed local political and administrative system which was not fully under the control of Rome, the soldiers may have had rather more importance as a political and security force than in urbanized and essentially peaceful provinces such as Syria or Egypt.¹¹¹ Notably, even in Egypt, the centurions appear to have exercised influence in villages, but not in the cities. Cities may have

¹⁰⁷ Alston (1995) 53–68; Campbell (1984). ¹⁰⁸ Mitchell (1976).

¹⁰⁹ Millar (1981); Sasel Kos (1978), 22–6; *RIB* 17, 491, 492, 152.

¹¹⁰ *P. Gen. Lat.* 1, *RMR* 68. See now Hanson (2001) 91–97; Alston (1995) 86–96.

¹¹¹ Tac. *Ann.* 14.31; Alston (1999).

been perceived as sufficiently developed not to need Roman security, and responsibility for security probably fell to the urban élites. Also, whereas villagers might be overawed by the power and prestige of the Roman soldiery, urban élites, often wealthier even than centurions and with their own separate access to political authority, were unlikely to allow themselves to be dominated by soldiers and their officers, at least not without complaint. The provincial governor not only needed the acquiescence of the soldiers to govern effectively, but also the support of the local élites. We would expect, therefore, gubernatorial reliance on the military, and hence the political power of the centurions and the soldiers, to decline as local élites learnt to exploit Roman political networks and as Roman officials grew to trust them.

Modes of interaction between soldiers and civilians were probably affected by social and ethnic changes in the soldiery themselves. During the first century AD the differences between legionaries and auxiliaries were eroded. The legions were recruited through a mixture of local enlistment and emergency drafts of soldiers from other provinces, and only when new legions were recruited was the Italian population drafted into the army.¹¹² Perhaps unsurprisingly soldiers who had served in provinces for up to twenty-five years tended to settle in those provinces on discharge. Some may already have formed liaisons with local women which were converted into marriage when the men left the army, though there is substantial circumstantial evidence to suggest that soldiers married late or tended not to marry, in marked contrast to what is known of the rest of provincial societies.¹¹³

There is considerable disagreement among historians as to the nature of the relationship between veterans and other elements of provincial societies, and it seems very likely that this disagreement reflects considerable variance in the social situation in the provinces.¹¹⁴ The richest documentary evidence relates to the soldiers and veterans serving in Egypt, but this evidence, coming overwhelmingly from veteran communities in villages in the north-east Fayyum, may not be typical of the social situation even in Egypt. The papyri from these villages show soldiers and veterans working and living alongside seemingly ordinary Egyptian villagers and being recruited from among that social group. There seems very little to separate villagers from soldiers in social or cultural terms.

Although the soldiers of the Fayyum clearly formed a distinct community, as can be seen in their letters and legal documentation, this is not evidence of ethnic or social segregation within the village, but

¹¹² Mann (1963), (1983). ¹¹³ Phang (2001).

¹¹⁴ Shaw (1983); Pollard (1996) 211–12; Fentress (1979), (1983); MacMullen (1963), (1984a); Carrié (1989); Alston (1995); Isaac (1992) 269–310; Alston (1999); Pollard (2000).

of the formation and manipulation of social networks, networks which may have eased individuals' paths into the army and helped create the connections which made life bearable. Most letters of the period attest the importance of these social networks for soldiers and civilians, and it was obviously an important means of social interaction in Egyptian society which has many anthropological parallels.¹¹⁵ It should come as no surprise that soldiers interacted with soldiers in a non-military sphere. Furthermore, military status and Roman citizenship brought legal privileges and at least some claim on the special attention of political authorities. Soldiers and veterans were a special group, but the Egyptian evidence, which finds support elsewhere, suggests that they were within society rather than outsiders (see pp. 219–22 below).

As noted earlier (pp. 164–5) it is very difficult to assess the comparative economic status of the soldiers. The papyri suggest that soldiers received only a small proportion of their assigned pay, the rest being deducted by the army to meet camp expenses.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, soldiers were probably often able to accumulate significant savings, and at least some of their capital might have been investable while they were still in service.¹¹⁷ The evidence for the payment of the bonus at discharge, which would have provided the soldiers with a considerable cash sum, is unfortunately vague and indecisive, and it is not clear whether land granted to soldiers, which continued irregularly at least through the first century AD, supplemented or replaced the discharge benefit. Tacitus' version of the complaints of the mutineers of AD 14 suggests that the state may have saved considerably by allotting land in lieu of cash, and the failure of Nero's colonies in Italy also suggest that a land grant might have been unpopular.¹¹⁸

Egyptian soldiers appear to have been at the upper end of the social spectrum in the villages of the Fayyum, but they were certainly in no position to rival local aristocrats.¹¹⁹ We do, however, sometimes find former soldiers enjoying high status in urban communities after discharge, though the origins of their comparative wealth may not have been military, and it is possible that a paucity of children may have encouraged veterans to be more generous benefactors. Recent work on inscriptions has suggested that those most insecure about their status are most prone to monumentalize that status after death, and the high numbers of inscriptions relating to what must have been a tiny element of the population may reflect the social insecurity of those whose status was elevated by service and related benefits.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Alston (1999). ¹¹⁶ Alston (1994); *P. Gen. Lat.* 1, 4, *RNR* 68–9; *P. Yadin* 722.

¹¹⁷ *P. Mich.* vii 435, 440. ¹¹⁸ Suet. *Nero* 9; Tac. *Ann.* 13.31, 14.27; Mann (1983) 56–7.

¹¹⁹ Alston (1995) 105–8. ¹²⁰ Woolf (1996). See also Hope (1997).

In the west the location of military camps appears to have had some effect on the process of urbanization, since the presence of soldiers probably encouraged the development of amenities and the camps were obvious possible centres for administration (see pp. 230–1 below). Soldiers were also probably prime consumers of imported goods, especially wine and oil, and the movement of pottery across northern Europe can, at least in the initial phases of imperial economic integration, be related to the location of the army.¹²¹ In much of the east and Africa, the situation was probably very different. Highly developed urban centres probably had more powerful effects on the highly monetized and comparatively sophisticated market than did the location of soldiers, and many of the major camps in the east were in any case placed in the environs of established cities.¹²² The real wealth of the ancient world lay in the land, and it seems improbable that soldiers were in any region ever able to hold significant quantities of it. Even if there was a bonanza in a newly conquered and unsophisticated province, the next generation of soldiers probably faced a wiser and more economically educated provincial population.

Without notable education, wealth or ethnic claims on loyalty (though it is uncertain how important these last were for any population in antiquity) soldiers were not in a good position to compete with local élites for political favours. Many of the accusations levelled at soldiers, which one presumes contain more than nuggets of truth, are contained in the literature of the élite. It is very difficult to imagine Apuleius, author of the *Golden Ass*, or Juvenal, author of satire 16, or Petronius, power-broker at the court of Nero and author of the *Satyricon*, quailing before soldiers as they depict their characters doing. Although soldiers were instruments of power and could be used by governors or emperors to intimidate or kill members of the aristocracy, such actions would smack of military dictatorship and be redolent of a corrupt and vicious emperor or governor, breaking the rules that were meant to establish government by consensus. Emperors and governors who wished to proclaim their virtues and win friends would exercise very public control over their troops and corrupt officials, and long decrees against abuses, such as Germanicus' decree on his visit to Egypt or Tiberius Julius Alexander's celebration of a new reign in declaring the reform of a corrupt system, were probably more the norm.¹²³ Soldiers might not have been able to win a favourable hearing in Rome complaining about the harsh discipline of a provincial governor, but provincials complaining of military indiscipline and corruption could ruin a governor's reputation. *Disciplina* may have been a symbol of military unity, but it was also a stick with which to beat the soldiers.

¹²¹ Hopkins (1980); Fulford (1996). ¹²² Pollard (2000). ¹²³ Chalon (1964); *Sel. Pap.* II 211.

Roman soldiers were always persons of power. There can be little doubt that their power was often used corruptly. Although no single description of the political and social relations of soldiers with provincial populations is ever likely to prove adequate, it seems that the power and influence of the soldiers declined over the generations, while their integration with local societies deepened. This gradual but never complete process of integration during the Principate parallels the emergence of the soldiery as a structurally differentiated group in the second and first centuries BC.

CHAPTER 6

WAR AND SOCIETY

COLIN ADAMS

This chapter has two main themes: the impact of society and social structures on the conduct of war, and the reciprocal effect of war on society. It concentrates on the changing character of external wars in the late Republic, the pressures which this caused in Rome and Italy, both politically and socially, and how these were eventually to lead to internal or civil wars which tore the Roman Republic apart. The imperial system which grew out of these struggles, and which in many ways was their logical outcome, saw radical change. Warfare again changed in character and purpose, if it is true that the reign of Augustus saw the end of imperial expansion. Political and social structures are at the heart of both the extreme belligerence of Rome in the late Republic and the relatively peaceful years of the Principate, the *pax Romana*. There is certainly a reciprocal effect: warfare and imperialism had a profound effect on the society of Roman Italy. The massive influx of wealth into Italy during the third and second centuries BC might have continued into the first century BC, but with it came severe political and social tensions. It is impossible to separate army and politics in the late Republic or Principate, but under Augustus the character of the army changed radically from that of a non-professional citizen army to a professional standing army. Links between war and social change were as much a part of the Roman revolution as anything else: ‘as states change their nature, so will their policy change, and so will their wars’.¹ The presence of the Roman army in the provinces and the wars fought there had dramatic effects on the provincial landscape, from the destruction of territory, to the demands made by armies for sustenance and later the function of the army as an instrument of law and order.

I. THE LATE REPUBLIC

The historian Sallust identifies many of the salient factors that ushered in the collapse of the Roman Republic, and it is worth quoting a long passage, as it is relevant for much of the subsequent discussion:

¹ Howard (1976) 76, cited by Patterson (1993) 109.

Before the destruction of Carthage, the Roman Senate and the Roman People managed the affairs of state in quiet and restrained co-operation, and there was no struggle for glory or domination between them. Fear of external enemies ensured that they conducted themselves sensibly. But, once that apprehension had vanished, in came arrogance and lack of self-restraint, the children of success . . . For the nobility proceeded to convert the dignity of their position, and the people their liberty, into self-indulgence, every man seeking to twist and turn and force it to his own selfish advantage. As a result the whole nation was split into two divisions, and Rome was torn to pieces in the middle. However, the nobility drew superior strength from its cohesion, while the strength of the People was diluted and dissipated by their greater numbers, and so was less effective. Domestic and foreign affairs were in the hands of a small group who also controlled the Treasury, the provinces, the great offices of state; theirs too the glories and the triumphs. The People were worn down by military service and poverty; the spoils of war were seized by the generals and shared with only a few, while the parents and little children of the soldiers were driven from their homes by neighbouring rich landowners. So power and greed ran riot, contaminated and pillaged everything, and held nothing sacred or worthy of respect, until they plunged themselves to their own destruction.²

We have all of the ingredients of change and socio-political tension: the changing character of warfare, dissatisfaction among soldiers, problems with land, inequalities in wealth, claims for land redistribution. Additionally, the end of the second century BC saw the development and culmination of the 'Italian question', which produced huge social tension and a civil war in Italy. The provinces too were not free from problems. Their societies were not only forced to adjust to new rulers, to the presence of Roman citizens, but also their lands could be the host of unwanted warfare, civil or otherwise, with its accompanying destruction.

II. STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF WAR AND THE CHANGING PATTERN OF WARFARE

The nature of war in the late Republic was very different from what had gone before; perhaps most striking is the multiple theatres of war, which placed a heavy toll on Roman and Italian resources. After the destruction of Carthage and the reduction of Greece to a province in 146 BC, Rome was involved in a series of less glamorous and profitable engagements. Our evidence for the mid-Republic, in large part Livy and Polybius, tends to emphasize foreign affairs over domestic, but that for the late Republic, principally Appian and Cicero, is more concerned with the political crises of the first century BC. Internal and external issues interacted, for example in Africa where the defeat of Carthage had left Rome with interests in Africa

² Sall. *Iug.* 41.2–9, anticipated by Polyb. 6.57.5–6.

and Numidia. The most serious problem was the outbreak in 112 BC of war against Jugurtha, a Numidian king. The war was bitter, not so much in itself, but in the alleged corruption and incriminations of various kinds found and exchanged among the ruling classes of Rome. These resulted, so the traditional view, in a feeble and inconsistent policy on Rome's part. Recently scholars have defended Roman policy: a war in Africa would be expensive, and it would have been better to rule through a client king.³ What we see in the last years of the second century is an increasing willingness, though certainly not universal tendency, often arising from the pressure imposed by other commitments or political tensions in Rome, to avoid major conflicts, if they could be solved in other ways.

But Rome was still involved in major overseas wars, and with the growth of empire Rome automatically took on responsibilities for pacification and administration.⁴ Wars of expansion continued apace (for example, Caesar's Gallic campaigns and Crassus' and Marcus Antonius' failed Parthian campaigns), but increasingly wars were fought to protect Roman territory, inside and outside Italy. Marius was entrusted with the defence of Roman interests against German tribes – and took some years to negate the danger. Roman interests in Asia Minor were famously threatened by Mithridates, and in Cilicia and Syria Parthia was a constant danger, and indeed invaded Syria. But more sinister conflict took place, which had a profound effect on social and political life in Rome and Italy – civil wars and disturbances. The Social War, the civil wars arising from the struggle between Marius and Sulla, the slave revolt of Spartacus, the war against Catiline and his conspirators, the civil war between Pompey and Caesar, and finally the civil wars following the assassination of Caesar, had serious consequences for Italy, and arguably nearly all had their roots in similar tensions. The competition for office and political tensions of the late second century gradually manifested themselves in armed struggle in Rome and Italy.

III. SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF ROMAN IMPERIALISM

No matter what the causes of wars or motives behind them, and these are, to some extent, irrecoverable, there is no doubt that there was a massive influx of public and private wealth and slaves into Italy in the second century BC and beyond. The scale of this influx of wealth is difficult to gauge, but it was certainly unprecedented, and came not only from booty and direct profits from war, but as time went on, from regular tribute imposed on Rome's provinces. We should also bear in mind that although there was undoubtedly a huge import of slaves into Italy, large numbers of people

³ Syme (1964) 174ff. ⁴ Lintott (1981); Brunt (1978).

enslaved in the process of war would have been sold locally.⁵ We are not, therefore, considering the transfer of whole populations to Italy.

In the city of Rome programmes of monumental building coincide with periods of Roman expansion: the fourth century BC saw a programme of building directly linked to expansion in Italy, especially dramatic in the years 340–270. The Punic Wars, although draining of resources, also generated vast profit and the accompanying building is striking. Indeed it is the case that the majority of temples built in the Republican period were financed by the spoils of war (*ex manubiis*), and there is a direct link between patronage of civic architecture and political and military success.⁶ The character of Rome changed, not only in its urban topography, but in its role as a city. We should note here the functional changes that took place which are directly linked to success in war – for example on buildings along the triumphal procession route.⁷ But the dedication of temples forms only part of the building that took place. As Rome's wealth grew and the size of the city increased, there came an increasing need for civic buildings and public amenities – the city's infrastructure. Such building brought honour and prestige not only to individuals, but to their *gens*.

The pace of public building was determined by success in war, the acquisition of booty and the income of newly generated provinces. It is notable that after 167 BC *tributum* (a tax levied to meet military expenses) was no longer collected in Italy. It fell to the provinces to provide tribute to Rome in the form of taxes. But there is a noticeable decline in public building in the later half of the second century BC and, in the period following the Gracchi, internal political conflict and civil war heralded a decline in the fabric of the city, not properly reversed until the time of Augustus. That is not to say that there was no significant building: Pompey's theatre and portico were built between 61 and 55 BC, Julius Caesar dedicated his basilica in the Forum in 46 BC and had grandiose plans for the Villa Publica in the Campus Martius. But the pace was not so frantic as in the third and second centuries.⁸

In the cities of Italy more generally the profits of war, both generated by Rome itself and by Italian communities and individuals, were enjoyed. A large-scale programme of colonization in Italy during the early part of the second century substantially changed the urban geography of the Italian peninsula, especially in northern Italy, where colonies such as Bononia, Parma, Mutina and Aquileia helped provide protection from Gallic incursions and were also administrative centres. An enormous amount of building activity took place in the cities of Italy, especially in Campania, and a

⁵ Note the important points of de Ste Croix (1981) 230–1; Millar (1984a) 11–12.

⁶ Favro (1994) 159; (1996) 53; Cornell (1996b). ⁷ Favro (1994).

⁸ Pompey's theatre: Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 50–2; portico: Prop. 2.32.11–16. On Caesar's building, see Meier (1995) 467–8.

large road-building programme had the effect of improving communications throughout the peninsula. Perhaps the best example in Italy of the results of this wealth is the construction in the second century BC of the monumental sanctuary complex at Pietrabbondante in Samnium. Both magistrates and private individuals paid for the construction of the complex, which included a temple, theatre, terraces and porticoes, with its own water supply.⁹ But such sanctuaries were more than simply religious sites; they had economic functions and became a focus of cultural interaction.

In the first century BC the Social War in Italy brought devastation to many regions and bitter divisions between communities, but its aftermath saw a greater integration of Italian communities into the government of the empire, and the rise of the Italian aristocracy – the New Men of Roman politics. All now shared in the profits of empire.

Personal gain is important. Indeed it could be said that the Roman state, although it might have enjoyed economic gain from war, also had to foot the bill for military campaigns. Individuals, on the other hand, stood to gain massively; so Rome's expansion had a profound effect on the economic life of the aristocracy.¹⁰ The wealth of individuals like Marcus Crassus and Julius Caesar could not easily be measured. Crassus' property alone was valued by Pliny the Elder at 200 million sesterces, his wealth by Plutarch at 7,100 talents before his expedition to Parthia, which no doubt generated more wealth even though he did not return.¹¹ It is not coincidental, or insignificant, that Crassus claimed that no one could be considered rich if he could not support an army from his own resources.¹² Julius Caesar's campaigns in Gaul generated vast income, even though he was considered not entirely honest in matters financial.¹³ Cato's concern about the decline of the Roman virtues of simple living is not without foundation, even if it was exaggerated (and hypocritical). The competition among the aristocracy to exceed each other in their patronage of temple construction and public building is reflected by an equal extravagance in their private residences. Lucullus' villa was notorious for its lavishness and his hedonistic lifestyle notable.¹⁴ The import of exotic marbles characterized public building, but these also found their way into private villas. In 58 BC Marcus Scaurus imported 360 marble columns for a temporary theatre before removing them to his villa.¹⁵ While such conspicuous opulence might attract criticism, it also brought prestige, which is illustrated nicely by a passage of Cicero. He states that 'a man's dignity may be enhanced by the house he lives in, but is not wholly dependent on it', but he goes on to say that in the case

⁹ Salmon (1965) on Samnium; Strazzula (1972) on Pietrabbondante.

¹⁰ De Ste Croix (1981) 347–8 has pointed out observations of Marx on the development of private fortunes during British imperial control of India.

¹¹ Plin. *HN* 33.10.134; Plut. *Vit. Crass.* 2.1–6. ¹² Cic. *Off.* 1.25.

¹³ Vell. Pat. 2.39; Suet. *Iul.* 54. ¹⁴ Plut. *Vit. Luc.* 39. ¹⁵ Plin. *HN* 36.4–8.

of one particular villa, 'everyone went to see it, and it was thought to have secured votes for the owner'.¹⁶

Public and private economic gain is sometimes hard to distinguish. As Rome's empire grew booty and direct profits from war were supplemented by a more regular income from the provinces, which is what made the cancellation of tribute in Italy in 167 BC possible. However, some provinces were richer than others; indeed some may have cost money to protect and police. But profits made in Asia and Sicily were so great they probably offset other losses. Occasionally large injections of wealth came in the form of legacies left to Rome by allies or client kings, the best example being the kingdom of Pergamum in 133 BC.¹⁷ Similar bequests followed: in 96 BC Rome acquired Cyrene from Ptolemy Apion, and it became a Roman province in 74, the bequest of Egypt itself after the death of Ptolemy XI Alexander II in 80 BC was unfulfilled, and in 74 BC Bithynia became a province after the death of Nicomedes III.¹⁸ But the lack of any structured financial policy, the control of finances by the Senate and political bodies of the state and the increasing influence of individual senators and magistrates meant that funds of the state could be diverted in the pursuit of personal political goals. Tiberius Gracchus did so with the Pergamene legacy mentioned above.

In the provinces, tribute was collected – tax both in kind and cash, under the direction of provincial governors. The legitimate profits of empire boosted the revenues of Rome, but there was much profit to be made illegitimately by governors. Verres in Sicily famously made a massive profit in a rich province; if we are to believe Cicero, he profited by 40 million sesterces.¹⁹ Cicero himself made some 2.2 million sesterces in his time in Cilicia, he argues through legitimate means.²⁰ What is more interesting, however, is the resentment caused between himself and his staff when he repaid some million sesterces to his provincial treasury.²¹ The implication is not only that governors could expect profits from their office, but so could their staff, who felt that this was part and parcel of provincial appointments.²² But the profits of empire were not only enjoyed by senators, but by many others – including tax-farmers, merchants and traders.²³

No doubt there were many throughout Italy who enjoyed similar increases in prosperity, but the picture is not universally rosy. As the nature of Rome's wars changed, campaigns becoming longer and further from home, pressures on Italy in general grew. As there was a property qualification for military service soldiers came from farms throughout Roman territory. The traditional view is that taking farmers away on campaign for long periods of time, not to mention the casualties of war, had a profound

¹⁶ Cic. *Off.* 1.39. ¹⁷ Plut. *Vit. Ti. Gracch.* 14; *IGRom.* iv 289 = *OGIS* 338.

¹⁸ See Lampela (1998) 227–8 for the will of Apion, 229–30 for the will of Alexander II.

¹⁹ Cic. *Verr.* 1.56. ²⁰ Cic. *Fam.* 5.20.9. ²¹ Cic. *Att.* 7.1.6. ²² See Hopkins (1978) 43.

²³ On tax-farming, see generally Badian (1972).

effect on Italian agriculture. Unprecedented wealth flowed into the hands of the upper classes, while small farmers had to sell off their land to them, with a concomitant increase in the divide between rich and poor. Land thus came to be concentrated in the hands of the wealthy, in large estates called *latifundia*, and this precipitated the political crisis which came to a head in 133 BC. Together with the decline in agriculture came a decline in the number of recruits to the army (see pp. 179–80 above).²⁴

Recent scholarship, however, has doubted this traditional picture on three main counts. First, there is no real evidence for a lack of recruits; they still came forward (especially if the campaigns were perceived to be profitable).²⁵ Secondly, it is not clear whether the pattern of warfare in the late second century was much different from what had gone before, when campaigns were similarly long, with sometimes little reward (in Spain particularly so). If this is the case, we should expect to see damaging effects on Italian agriculture earlier than the mid-second century BC. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there is no archaeological evidence for the growth of *latifundia* at the expense of small farms in this period.²⁶ The political crisis of 133 BC concerned the allocation of *ager publicus* not the plight of small farms.

But there is little doubt that poverty and pressure on public land formed part of the crisis of the Republic. This pressure depended on population size, and this has been the subject of some debate.²⁷ It is argued that there was a decrease in the population of Italy in the period from the third century BC to the first imperial census in 28 BC.²⁸ But if we accept this, why is there pressure on public land? We must ask also why Rome fought so many wars if there was a manpower shortage in Italy in the late Republic.²⁹ It seems more likely that the population of Italy was larger than has been traditionally held, and that there was competition to exploit land. The success of already wealthy individuals in securing it would have therefore created resentment. Limited amounts of land available for the settlement of veterans made land a political issue.

In the relationship between the army and its commanders, land came to be a matter of central importance. Marius, according to our sources, was the first military commander to open the army to landless recruits (*capite censi*), although it is equally likely that he was merely formalizing an existing unofficial practice.³⁰ Landless soldiers, upon completion of their service, expected the provision of land. This became a central political issue, and Sulla's failure to provide for his veterans created a lasting problem; the

²⁴ See the discussion in Rich (1983). ²⁵ Rich (1983) 297–9.

²⁶ Of principal interest here is the villa of Settefinestre; see Carandini (1985).

²⁷ The standard work is Brunt (1971), but see most recently Morley (2001).

²⁸ For discussion, see Lo Cascio (1994). ²⁹ See Rich (1983).

³⁰ Sall. *Iug.* 86; Gell. *NA* 16.10.10.

Senate's failure to so provide helped strengthen the position of the first-century BC dynasts Caesar and Pompey.³¹ As we shall see one of the central aspects of the imperial period is the move away from the farmer/soldier of the Republic to a distinct separation between professional soldiers and civilians. These issues were central to the transformation of Italy in the late Republic, not only in social terms, but political.

IV. THE EFFECTS OF WAR IN ITALY IN THE LATE REPUBLIC

The effects of the Hannibalic War in Italy had been serious, but it is testament to Rome's strength, and more especially that of its allies who suffered the most, that recovery was swift. The long-lasting effects of the war have often been exaggerated, and in them some have found the origins for the serious social problems that developed in the late Republic.³² But they could not have damaged agricultural land irretrievably, could not have caused the problems of the rural poor associated with the decline of Italian agriculture or even had an effect on levels of manpower, which were only to become a serious problem sixty years later. Yet it is the case, as is often glossed over in modern scholarship, that the human cost of wars in Italy, and indeed throughout the Mediterranean world, must have been great. Probably more important than the legacy of the Second Punic War in Italy were the effects of contemporary wars and civil disturbance in the first century BC.³³

The historian Florus claimed that the devastation caused by the Social War was great.³⁴ Indeed if we are to believe our sources, the atrocities carried out in the course of the war were considerable, and in the spirit of civil war perhaps even more ferocious than those sanctioned in Roman foreign wars.³⁵ But during other conflicts destruction of property and the spoiling of land and crops was widespread, as was the drain on resources imposed by foraging armies. Two foraging parties might even come to blows, as Diodorus reports in his account of the siege of Mutina in 43 BC.³⁶ In 83 BC Sulla prohibited his troops from ravaging Italy, but to little avail. It was at this time that the regions close to Rome suffered – especially Campania and Etruria, which in turn led to hardship in the city itself through food shortages. Ancient sources are united in describing the bleak times extending from the Social War to Sulla's dictatorship.³⁷ There

³¹ Brunt (1962), revised in Brunt (1988) 240–80, is of central importance to this issue.

³² See Toynbee (1965); Hopkins (1978) 1–98; Rathbone (1981); de Neeve (1984); Carandini (1988); and Morley (2001).

³³ Most important here is Brunt (1971) 285–93. ³⁴ Flor. 2.6.11.

³⁵ Diod. Sic. 37.12 on the murder of Romans at Picenum; App. *B Civ.* 1.38 for violence against Romans at Asculum.

³⁶ Diod. Sic. 37.24, with Roth (1999) 311. ³⁷ For example, App. *B Civ.* 1.95; Strabo 5.4.11.

was little respite, since in 77 the consul Lepidus, in revolt, clashed with Pompey and much destruction followed before Lepidus fled to Sicily. The revolt of Spartacus soon followed, and even if the details are unclear this was a serious matter. For two years an army of slaves, which was large enough to demand the allocation of eight to ten legions to destroy it, roamed through Italy in a frenzy of pillage. This was bad enough, but coupled with the economic demands of mobilizing such a large force to deal with Spartacus, the removal of so many individuals from their farms to serve in the legions and the fear that the revolt must have engendered among slave-owners throughout the peninsula, the economic effects of the revolt are easily underestimated. Cicero aptly described the situation: 'when hostile armies are not far away, even if no real attack has taken place, even then herds are deserted, the cultivation of the land is given up, the merchant's ships lie idle at port'.³⁸

The wide support for Catiline after his flight from Rome under the cloud of his alleged conspiracy was also potentially serious – according to Cicero, all those in debt rallied to Catiline.³⁹ The burden of debt, the failure of Sulla to provide properly for his veterans, the misery brought to many by Sulla's proscriptions, the aftermath of the ravages of years of civil war and the draining effects of the Mithridatic War, were serious issues causing considerable distress and political upheaval. There might have been dire consequences for Rome if not for the swift action of Cicero.⁴⁰ More serious yet, but averted by Caesar's swift advance, was the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. Caesar was careful to ensure that his soldiers were disciplined, as far as possible, but in the struggles following his death, the soldiers of the triumvirs ravaged Italy. Appian describes an almost total breakdown of order (*B Civ.* 5.14–18). It is easy to assume that soldiers and veterans were behind the pillaging and destruction of Italy, but arising out of the ravages of civil war came brigands and kidnappers, unrestrained until the victory of Octavian (Suet. *Aug.* 32). Even peace did not terminate the social consequences of warfare since demobilization of very substantial forces entailed massive programmes of land allocation and resettlement.

V. EFFECTS OF IMPERIAL EXPANSION IN THE PROVINCES

The effect of Roman imperialism in the Mediterranean and beyond was determined not just by events on the ground, but in the political developments in the city of Rome itself. It is difficult, however, given the Romanocentric nature of our evidence, to establish a detailed picture of how the lives of provincials were affected by Roman expansion. There is a tendency to think that Rome was always the aggressor, the cause of

³⁸ Cic. *Leg. Man.* 32.

³⁹ Cic. *Off.* 2.84; *Cat.* 2.8; Dio Cass. 37.25.

⁴⁰ Cic. *Sest.* 12.

inhabitants' distress, but this does not take into account the fact that even by the time of Caesar, large parts of Spain, Gaul and Asia were not fully under Roman control, and that there existed other extremely aggressive parties, some local tribes, others powerful kings, of whom Mithridates VI of Pontus is the best example.⁴¹

There is little doubt that the immediate effects of war could be catastrophic, and there are certainly horrific accounts of battle and its aftermath in our sources. Beyond the destructiveness of war itself, important campaigns meant large armies had to be fed, and this had a profound effect on local economies. But small raids could be equally destructive. Particularly illuminating in this respect is a letter written to Cicero by Decimus Brutus in 43 BC in which he mentions his advance against the Alpine tribes of Cisalpine Gaul: he attacked 'not so much looking for the title of Imperator as wishing to satisfy the troops', and in the course of the engagements 'captured many fortified villages and laid waste to many' (*Fam.* 2.4).

But what effect did warfare have on the lands in which battles were fought? In a recent study Paul Erdkamp has studied the effects of warfare on food supply and agriculture, and argued that these were uneven, and differed according to military circumstances.⁴² Some regions would hardly be affected, others devastated. But such devastation was probably less than what might have been experienced during a natural disaster, was clearly more localized and recovery in many cases could be speedy. Even the ravaging of landscapes by armies was not so destructive to long-term agriculture as it was to the 'societal fabric' of regions.⁴³ In Roman warfare 'the economic strength of a people and their reserves of manpower were decisive factors',⁴⁴ so that destruction was designed to shock enemies into submission. However, it is clear from our sources that the economy of regions, even commercial activity, largely continued despite war. Some individuals, such as slave-traders, may even have profited from it.

Politically the threat of Rome and the effects of Roman domination could be profound, but they should not be exaggerated. The regions of the eastern Mediterranean had not enjoyed 'freedom' since Alexander the Great, and especially for some regions in the Levant, and later Egypt, the domination of Rome merely replaced that of another foreign power. But in the time leading up to war, states were faced with difficult political decisions, with potentially devastating results if the wrong decision was taken. How to choose between supporting Rome or Antiochus in Asia Minor? There could only be one victor, but at times it must have seemed unclear who that would be. The end result was domination of one party or another;

⁴¹ Millar (1984a). ⁴² Erdkamp (1998), esp. 208–69. See also Roth (1999) *passim*.

⁴³ Foxhall (1993) 143. ⁴⁴ Goldsworthy (1996) 285.

taxes would still have to be paid.⁴⁵ Such decisions were equally faced in the late first century, when communities chose between dynasts in the civil war – to be either Pompeians or Caesarians: many inevitably made the wrong decision.⁴⁶

The domination of Rome, however, brought a new culture, one which was to dominate the Mediterranean and beyond for many centuries. It is difficult to trace the process of acculturation in the provinces during the Republican period, but from the time of Augustus on, Rome's hold, both militarily and culturally, on this region grew.

VI. POLITICS, THE ARMY AND THE FALL OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

Political developments and the increasing tendency to circumvent the constitution provided the necessary environment for the dynasts Pompey and Caesar. In many ways these were the logical outcome of the political and social tensions of the late Republic. Ultimately, though, it was the Senate's failure to control both its own members and the army which led to civil war – indeed it was the Senate's failure to bind the soldiers to it that allowed Marius, Pompey and Caesar to act according to their own agendas. Appian puts it thus (*B Civ.* 5.17.1):

the majority of the commanders were unelected, as happens in civil war, and their armies were recruited neither from the register according to ancestral custom, nor to meet any need of their country. Instead of serving the common interest, they served only the men who had enlisted them, and even so not under compulsion of the law, but by private inducements.

The army of the early Republic had been a citizen militia, recruited from property-owners.⁴⁷ But any notion of this was lost in the late Republic through a gradual process firmed up by the military reform of Marius in 107 BC, which abolished the property qualification for military service. Anti-Marian sources would have us believe that this was crucial. But Marius was a pragmatist and was merely recognizing the status quo; there is neither reason to believe that there was a sudden rush to enlist among the landless poor nor that the levy became obsolete.⁴⁸ Perhaps of more importance than the Marian reforms was the aftermath of the Social War, when Roman citizenship extended throughout the Italian peninsula, effectively removing the distinction between Roman and allied contingents. It seems clear that

⁴⁵ See Millar (1984a) for discussion.

⁴⁶ On Pompeians and Caesarians, see Caes. *B. Hisp.* 17. Gruen (1974) 374–5 rightly points out, however, that the civil war had been raging for four years at this point, and that it is wrong to see this as a typical situation.

⁴⁷ Plut. *Vit. Mar.* 9.1; Val. Max. 2.3.1. ⁴⁸ Brunt (1971) 403–8, and on the levy 408–10, 635–68.

the individuals who made up the legions came from the Italian countryside. All of this is significant in that it shows the changing character of the army, which in turn implied changing motives for military service. We should be wary of the comments of ancient authors on this matter, for they are loaded with class bias. Sallust's comments on Marius' recruits are illustrative: 'And indeed, if a man is ambitious for power, he can have no better supporters than the poor, for they are not concerned about their own possessions, for they have none, and whatever will put something into their pockets is right and proper in their eyes.'⁴⁹ A fragment of Dio repeats this theme for followers of Sulla, saying that they would do anything for the right reward.⁵⁰ But it is only right that payment should have been made for the risks taken. In addition to this, commanders had an obligation to their soldiers extending beyond their period of service.

The army of the Republic was not the professional standing army of the Empire, and soldiers were not pursuing a military career. They enlisted for short lengths of time (in the first century BC, usually no more than six years), but came to expect to be settled on land upon discharge, which generated problems in itself, as there was not enough land for all.⁵¹ Not all wars were profitable, and we should not forget the threat of horrific injury or death. There are instances also when pay for soldiers was overdue and mutinies were not unknown.⁵² The wars against Sertorius in Spain did not generate vast booty, and there were sometimes difficulties in paying troops, even if Sertorius was able to reward his own.⁵³ Indeed military service was not always lucrative, and a man of middling means could be reduced to a state of poverty.⁵⁴ Land was therefore the guarantee of a reasonable future after service. The fact that it was not always forthcoming was a great destabilizing factor in the late Republic as we have seen.

But there can be no doubt that booty and donatives were an important incentive. A moralizing approach to this issue is unreasonable, for all armies engaged in the demand for booty and all expected reward for their service; such things were neither unexpected nor new, nor are they indicative of moral decline. The important question is whether this engendered an undisciplined army, only willing to fight for the highest bidder. Was this very different from the armies of the mid-Republic? We should be reminded of the well-known passage in Polybius, which describes the advantages for all in plunder which could be derived from war against Carthage in 264 BC.⁵⁵ Precisely what the attitude of normal Roman citizens was to war is unclear in our sources, but it is likely that they were just as aggressive as

⁴⁹ Sall. *Iug.* 86.3. ⁵⁰ Dio Cass. fr. 108.1–2.

⁵¹ In 13 BC, Augustus substituted cash for land upon discharge, probably because it was impossible to provide enough land; cf. Suet. *Aug.* 56; Dio Cass. 54.25.5.

⁵² Cic. *Q. Fr.* 1.1.5. ⁵³ Cic. *Pis.* 92–3; Plut. *Vit. Sert.* 10.3.

⁵⁴ Brunt (1988) 256. ⁵⁵ Polyb. 1.11.

their senatorial counterparts.⁵⁶ So for the ordinary soldier economic gain was an important incentive. But this did not necessarily mean disloyalty to the Republic and indeed examples of desertions from one general to another can be cited which demonstrate loyalty to the Republic – Sulla's march on Rome, for example, rallied soldiers to its defence. So it is unwise to make broad statements about where the army's loyalty lay.⁵⁷

What can be said of military commanders? Personal gain was important to them too. Power and prestige was brought by military commands; success in war and the wealth it generated meant political success – for Rome's generals were magistrates. Their political clout arguably came from their client base, and although it is simplistic to argue for client armies, large numbers of clients undoubtedly rallied in support of their patron; clients, too, could be generated by the distribution of *beneficia* in return for military support. But it is certainly inaccurate to speak of private armies, except in periods of civil war, and the notion that oaths of allegiance to commanders undermined the authority of the state or were somehow more sinister in the late Republic is not entirely true.⁵⁸ None of these factors were new or revolutionary. Arguably, all war was fought for economic reasons, and from this resulted power:

Most conflicts between states were simultaneously economic and political in character: exploitation and subjection were synonymous. In the ancient world power and wealth were not independent notions; each fed on the other . . . power was used to seize wealth . . . wealth was seized in order to enhance power.⁵⁹

A particularly striking statement of Cassius Dio, concerning Julius Caesar, neatly brings out the important link between economic and political gain: 'There were two things which created, preserved, and increased dominations, soldiers and money, and these two were dependent on each other.'⁶⁰

This helps to explain the competition for important military commands and provinces in the second and first centuries BC – of which there are a number of good examples. In 88 BC, after his consulship, Sulla was assigned the command against Mithridates VI. Asia was seen as a lucrative stage for war, and Marius, in collaboration with the tribune P. Sulpicius Rufus, endeavoured to have the command transferred.⁶¹ A number of Pompey's commands were highly sought after prizes – his success against the pirates ensured that considerable booty went to Pompey.⁶² Although in the wake of the Catiline affair Caesar's appointment to the province of the tracks and

⁵⁶ Harris (1979) 42. ⁵⁷ See Brunt (1988) 257–65.

⁵⁸ Brunt (1988) 261, who does suggest that in the turbulent times of the late Republic it may have been tempting for soldiers to seek clarity in their oath of allegiance.

⁵⁹ Garlan (1975) 183. ⁶⁰ Dio Cass. 42.49.4.

⁶¹ App. *B Civ.* 1.55; on Mithridates, see McGing (1986).

⁶² On the feeling of relief that Pompey's command against the pirates brought in Rome, see Cic. *Leg. Man.* 44.

forests of Italy was not necessarily an insult, it was not good enough for Caesar, who obtained by a law of the people the command in Gaul, contrary to senatorial arrangement.⁶³ The transfer of commands undermined the authority of the Senate in foreign affairs, and in many ways foreign affairs came to be driven by the interests of individuals.

To return to Sallust's statement, quoted above, there is no one reason for the collapse of the Roman Republic, but what is certain is that the fabric of Roman society was torn apart in the last two centuries BC. The causes of this are inextricably linked to war and imperialism, but more importantly to the profound effects that they had on Roman society and politics. It is all too easy to see the collapse of the Republic arising out of the rivalries of individuals, and they indeed played a vital role, but the part of the people is equally important – they passed the laws which bypassed the Senate. Also, with the wealth generated by empire came social problems, the answers to which often damaged the interests of the very aristocracy that opposed the ambitions and tactics of reformers. The unwillingness to respond to such problems helped to create the environment necessary for the rise of the dynasts. The Civil War brought unprecedented upheaval to Italy and the provinces, and although none of the great figures of the late Republic, even Caesar, might have envisaged an autocratic government, Augustus had no such scruples.⁶⁴

VII. THE EARLY EMPIRE

If the Roman Republic can properly be viewed as a militaristic society, Rome under the emperors is surely a military autocracy. Where the senate had failed to bind the army to itself, Augustus made no such mistake – the army remained, throughout the period, bound to the emperor (see pp. 191–2 above). This link was made in several ways: through an oath of allegiance, the emperor's personal link to the soldiers in his role as supreme commander, through imperial propaganda – for example, the emperor's projection of himself as fellow soldier (*commilito*) and, perhaps most importantly, the army's reliance on the emperor for its pay and donatives.⁶⁵ The relationship was not always an easy one – indeed, the emperor Tiberius famously compared it to 'holding a wolf by the ears'.⁶⁶ Our sources betray a complex relationship – in return for their loyalty, soldiers could expect pay and privileges, including the right to appeal to the emperor, and presumably receive favourable treatment. But the lengths to which emperors had to go

⁶³ Suet. *Iul.* 19.2, with Brunt (1971) 291.

⁶⁴ By far the best account of the fall of the Republic remains Brunt (1988) 1–92.

⁶⁵ The most important treatment of the relationship between army and emperor is Campbell (1984). See also Campbell (2002).

⁶⁶ Suet. *Tib.* 25.1.

to ensure loyalty and keep soldiers in line is noteworthy; witness the regular pressure placed on emperors to increase pay and donatives to the army, especially in times of political crisis. Domitian increased military pay by one third to 1,200 sesterces and at the end of the second century, Septimius Severus, and later Caracalla, introduced substantial pay-rises. Donatives were especially important during the uncertainty of imperial accessions: Claudius granted 15,000 sesterces to each of the praetorians, and even the prudent Marcus Aurelius paid out 20,000, again to the praetorians. All of this placed a heavy burden on the Roman state. There are many examples of rebellion or unrest among the soldiery, even in the early Empire. Tiberius thought the mutinies in Pannonia and Germany serious enough to send Drusus and Germanicus to deal with soldiers' grievances.⁶⁷ The mutiny of the invasion force of Britain before its departure is obscured by its later success.⁶⁸ There are many other episodes – 'the tips of a permanent iceberg of potential or actual soldierly unrest'.⁶⁹

In order to help fund the military Augustus established the *aerarium militare* in AD 6 with a substantial grant from his own fortune (see p. 175 above).⁷⁰ For the first time in over 150 years, a tax was levied in Italy to ensure on-going funding for the treasury. The cost of the army was substantial, perhaps as much as 40 per cent of Rome's income from the provinces.⁷¹ But this, of course, depended on the province – some were militarily more important than others, and it is most likely that military units stationed in provinces would be paid directly from the tax profits from those provinces rather than from the central treasury.

Several points emerge from this: control of the army and foreign affairs came to be centred in the hands of the emperors, and the payment of the army from imperial funds should be viewed as an important facet of the gradual blurring of differences between imperial private funds and those of the state.

The scope for military glory, for developing *clientelae* among the soldiery and in the provinces, so important to senators in the late Republic, was largely removed. After Augustus all emperors assumed charge of military deployment, and of declarations of war and peace; indeed, Strabo claims that Augustus was 'lord of war and peace'.⁷² The political ramifications of this are not strictly relevant here: it suffices to note that emperors or members of their immediate family, rather than senators, assumed most important military commands. Probably with a mind to their political

⁶⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 1.16ff. ⁶⁸ Dio Cass. 60.19.1–3. ⁶⁹ James (2001) 79.

⁷⁰ Dio Cass. 55.24–5; *Res Gestae* 17.2.

⁷¹ For a summary, see Campbell (1999); for more detail, Hopkins (1980) 124–5; Campbell (1984) 161–76. For Egypt, and an argument that, at least there, the cost of the army was a small percentage of the province's income, see Carrié (1977).

⁷² Strabo 17.3.25 (840).

safety, emperors were reluctant to involve senators in military activity. But below the senatorial class the imperial period heralded a distinct change in the nature of military personnel.

The professional soldier of the imperial period was perhaps little different from his Republican counterpart in terms of social standing, but what marked him as different was his professional status (see pp. 192–3 above). Soldiers continued to come from poor social backgrounds and rural communities and recruitment in the provinces gathered pace as time progressed. By the time of Hadrian most legions were recruiting locally. Soldiers and veterans are often considered to be privileged in relation to civilians, and in many cases they were, for example in terms of local economies (see below), but we should not exaggerate this. It is unlikely that wealthy individuals volunteered for service and it is likely that they could avoid conscription. Military pay, while certainly more than an average wage, was not very substantial (at least until the third century and Septimius Severus' increase), and while the discharge bonus might have permitted a veteran to invest in a modest amount of land, when compared with the basic property qualifications for, say, the equestrian class, it was modest indeed. Soldiers may have been able to become men of some influence in an Egyptian village like Karanis, but they rarely appear holding local magistracies, which entailed expense.⁷³

A professional army meant bureaucracy. For the army of the Republic we rely primarily on literary evidence, especially Livy, but in the Empire bureaucracy generated huge numbers of documents, and the growing amount of documentary evidence for the army certainly supplements the meagre literary evidence for the soldiery, where mentions of soldiers are usually anecdotal or derogatory. The complex military bureaucracy is evidenced through inscriptions, Egyptian papyri, the Vindolanda writing tablets and ostraca, most importantly from Egypt and Bu Njem in Libya.⁷⁴ These have allowed some insight into the literacy of soldiers, which appears not to have been high, and thus the specialized bureaucracy was a preserve of very few. The picture of soldiers as limited in education and literacy is to some extent supported by our documentary evidence, but it is nowhere more strongly stated than in the comments of writers like Cassius Dio. In his fictional speech of Maecenas to Augustus, preserved in Book 52 of his history, Dio has Maecenas advise Augustus not to admit *equites* who had served as soldiers to the Senate. He considered it shameful that such individuals should be admitted the highest order. This is highly anachronistic, however, and reflects Dio's opinion about such promotions in his own day. Other

⁷³ On Karanis, and the social status of veterans in Egypt, see Alston (1995) *passim*.

⁷⁴ Many papyri relevant to the military are conveniently gathered in *RMR*, and the best sourcebook on the army is Campbell (1993). The Vindolanda tablets are discussed by Bowman (1994). The ostraca from Bu Njem are published with a commentary by Marichal (1992).

writers, like Juvenal (satire 16) and Apuleius (*Met.* 9.39, 9.42, 10.1, 13) paint a similar picture of brutish, uneducated soldiers.

Dio's comments are interesting, however. It became possible in the imperial period for soldiers to progress through the ranks and achieve senior social standing. The careers of hardy professional soldiers in the imperial period are well attested on inscriptions from around the empire, but there are limitations to our evidence. Among the ranks we have evidence for many different special appointments, and soldiers performing these came to be known as *immunes*. Some time during the second century AD a distinction emerged between these and the more senior ranks, or *principales*. However, we know little of the pattern of promotion and advancement. It is difficult to say whether there was a deliberate policy to develop the skills and experience of these men in an administrative or military capacity, but we can be sure that broad experience brought with it the chance of advancement. A good example is a letter of AD 107 from Julius Apollinarius, stationed in Bostra in Arabia, to his father in Karanis, in which he writes: 'I have asked Claudius Severus, the governor, to appoint me as a clerk on his staff, and he said, "There is no vacancy; nevertheless, in the meantime I shall appoint you as a clerk of the legion with expectation of advancement."' ⁷⁵

More senior officers, from centurions upwards, came to be very well incorporated into the fabric of Roman bureaucratic life, not just in the army (and of course its policing and administrative dealings with local communities) but also in the imperial administrative structure. The centurionate was dominated by legionaries of long standing, but was also open to men of equestrian status, which is indicative of its importance. For non-equestrians promotion to the rank of chief centurion (*primus pilus*) brought admission to the equestrian class. This brought opportunities for further promotion to procuratorships and even equestrian governorships.⁷⁶ The more senior ranks of prefect and tribune were held by men of equestrian class, and were often promoted centurions. These posts, known as the *tres militiae*, were prefect of a cohort, military tribune and prefect of an *ala*. These ranks served to increase the number of experienced men available for administrative posts, and holders of such ranks often progressed into the most senior equestrian prefectures: prefect of the corn supply, prefect of Egypt and the praetorian prefectures.⁷⁷

In terms of Roman society generally these posts offered social mobility and had the effect of integrating the military career structure with the civilian. Although it is fair to say that in the imperial period there comes a separation of soldiers from civilians, these career structures provide one area of symbiosis. They represented an important method of

⁷⁵ *P Mich.* vii 466 = Campbell 36. ⁷⁶ See Dobson (1972), (1974), (1978).

⁷⁷ See Brunt (1983) and on the prefect of Egypt Brunt (1975).

securing advancement and often marked the beginning of careers in public life. The patronage of senators was often sought to secure these posts for young men (and perhaps occasionally seasoned campaigners). Letters of the younger Pliny clearly show the importance of patronage in securing a tribunate, and inscriptions show the privileges and honours awarded to these men and, often, imperial patronage.⁷⁸ It was the advancement of soldiers into the upper echelons of society, and especially the Senate, which so annoyed Cassius Dio. These specialist soldiers, described as *viri militares*, some have argued, enjoyed particular influence with the emperors and fast-track careers, becoming consuls after only two previous posts as legionary commanders and a praetorian legateship in an imperial province. A tendency to systematize our evidence has resulted in the theory that these individuals formed a homogeneous group, specially favoured, which they did not.⁷⁹ It seems that many soldiers in the army had an opportunity to gain wide experience in a range of different posts, and this was also true of the more senior appointments which might lead to careers in the imperial administration after a period of military service. The idea of specialist *viri militares* is anachronistic; most men gained wide experience in the same way as their civilian counterparts.

VIII. ARMY AND SOCIETY IN THE PROVINCES

The issue of military administration and its link to civil bureaucracy necessarily leads on to the major theme of the army and provincial society. Over a period of centuries Roman conquest effectively brought a vast territory under Roman control, stretching from the River Tyne in Britain to the Rhine and Danube in Europe, the Euphrates in Syria and the deserts of north Africa. A professional standing army under the Empire was permanently stationed in the provinces by the end of the second century AD. This army was made up of both legions and auxiliaries, and in smaller provinces detachments of these larger units were dispersed. The result was that some 400,000 soldiers were spread throughout the empire and came to form an important feature in its fabric. At a provincial level the army represented a significant component in everyday life, at once a source of exploitation and a focus of trade and investment. But just as every Roman province was different in character, so was the relationship between each province and its military residents. Recent studies have stressed that soldiers became well integrated into provincial life, but at the same time maintained a separate identity.⁸⁰ While every province of the empire was different, and while it is possible to some degree to see the empire as a system of semi-independent

⁷⁸ Plin. *Ep.* 3.8.

⁷⁹ See Campbell (1975).

⁸⁰ See Alston (1999) 175–9 for a summary.

regions bound by a loose imperial bureaucracy, the army was the most significant and visible reminder of Roman control.⁸¹

Any study of the formal and informal interaction between soldier and civilian in the Roman empire must take account of both archaeological and historical evidence – literary and documentary texts. However, this is not as easy as it might appear. We do not have enough of either type of evidence and, more importantly, it is rare for both historical and archaeological evidence to turn up at the same location. Vindolanda in Roman Britain and Dura-Europus in Syria are exceptional. Egypt provides much documentary evidence but little archaeology, the northern frontiers much archaeology but almost no documentary evidence. It is difficult also to make observations about the relationship between the army and local government in the provinces (and indeed any directions from Roman officials) precisely because most of our information about provincial government comes from non-military provinces such as Bithynia–Pontus. To this extent we need to turn to Egyptian papyri – there is no need to assume that Egypt was any more unusual as a province than any other.

Soldiers could have a profound effect on the regions in which they were based, and indeed those stationed in outposts are far more likely to have had an impact on local society than those in barracks. So, the further from formal control (in the form of the emperor or commander) the wider the impact on society. On one level the army provided a medium for cultural integration and assimilation, on another a force of occupation. It is all too easy to forget the often miserable and horrific circumstances of the initial conquest and establishment of Roman rule, to view it as some glorious crusade and civilizing mission.⁸² Is it universally correct to think of Roman conquest and rule as a ‘good thing’? Some provincials certainly thought otherwise – the classic example is the famous speech of Calgacus on Agricola’s attempt to invade Caledonia in northern Britain: ‘They rob, butcher, plunder, and call it “empire”; and where they make a desolation, they call it “peace”’.⁸³

Roman sources show two main things: soldiers were ubiquitous and they oppressed local populations.⁸⁴ Certainly abuses did occur, and as we shall see this precipitated a serious attempt by Roman authorities to prevent them; but we should not automatically assume that such abuses represent normality. We should not generalize; exception to normality is exactly what we would expect to find in our sources. We should also bear in mind that the perception of the Roman army as a force of occupation or of peacekeeping depended on the loyalties or prejudices of the viewer. Few

⁸¹ On the minimalist view of the Roman empire, see Garnsey and Saller (1987) 20–40.

⁸² Drinkwater (1990); Woolf (1998), for example. ⁸³ Tac. *Agr.* 30.

⁸⁴ The most frequently cited passages are Apul. *Met.* 9.39–42; Juv. *Satires* 16; see also Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 3.159–62.

Roman provinces were free from revolt or local disquiet. Newly established provinces and notoriously difficult ones needed pacification and control rather than mere policing. The eastern provinces demanded a large military presence for different reasons. Those provinces, such as Syria, which bordered on Parthia, needed protection. Egypt was notoriously resistant to civil law, but this traditional picture is surely not so simple. However, the area from Egypt through the Levant did see several serious rebellions against Roman rule. Even the more 'Romanized' provinces in the west, such as Gaul, experienced revolts in the early imperial period. These revolts are certainly evidence for resistance to Roman rule, but we should also view them as part of a larger process of assimilation and acculturation, in that at least some inhabitants of rebellious provinces had an opportunity to display their loyalty to Rome.⁸⁵

It is argued that provinces were better off materially under Roman control, and this would certainly be the case with the upper classes, from whom the Romans would ultimately derive the local functionaries on which their control of provinces depended. As we shall see, profit from Roman occupation could extend far down the socio-economic scale. There were always dissenters, but for every Calgacus declaring the *pax Romana* a desolation there would be provincials eager for further incorporation into Roman society. Generally, and in many respects by virtue of the willingness of Rome to admit provincials to its citizenship, most rebellion or dissension was of a local nature and easily dealt with.

IX. MILITARY OPPRESSION OF CIVILIANS

The brutish soldier oppressing provincial civilians is not just a literary *topos*. It is not only from documentary, literary evidence, or the valuable evidence of the New Testament that we hear of oppression; it is also the subject of governors' edicts, imperial legislation and Roman law. The lawyer Ulpian, writing on the duties of a provincial governor, states that the governor must ensure that 'nothing is done by individual soldiers exploiting their position and claiming unjust advantages for themselves, which does not pertain to the communal benefit of the army'.⁸⁶ He is also clear on the governor's duty to ensure that no illegal financial exactions are made from civilians. Even emperors showed concern, one of the best examples being Tiberius' response to a prefect of Egypt sending more tribute than had been stipulated: the emperor said that he 'wanted his sheep shorn, not flayed'.⁸⁷

However, such stipulations in law or imperial concern for provincial flocks was probably small comfort to civilians. Some of our best evidence

⁸⁵ Woolf (1998) 32.

⁸⁶ *Dig.* 1.18.6.5–7. On illegal financial exactions, see *Dig.* 1.18.6.1.

⁸⁷ *Dio Cass.* 57.10.5.

for relations between soldiers and civilians comes from the New Testament. John the Baptist advised two soldiers, possibly of king Herod, not to 'extort money from anyone, do not act as an informer, and be satisfied with your own pay'.⁸⁸ In other parts of the New Testament, soldiers who displayed humanity and kindness were singled out for praise, just because they were exceptions in a body widely thought to be unjust and greedy.⁸⁹ Just how common extortion could be is well illustrated by a number of papyri from Egypt. The most telling is a private account dating to the second century, where along with unsurprising disbursements such as 20 drachmas for a suckling pig, entries are made for payments to guards: 100 drachmas to two police agents, a further 100 to another police agent and, most surprising, 2,200 drachmas 'for extortion' (*diaseismos*, literally 'shaking down').⁹⁰ A papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, dating to AD 37, seems to be the testament of a village secretary to the effect that he knows of no extortion by soldiers taking place.⁹¹ Such declarations, however, should not be taken at face value, as we have examples of complicity between local officials and soldiers in wrongdoing.⁹²

One point that arises from the Egyptian evidence, however, is that such extortion in Roman provinces was nothing new. The Ptolemaic kings had issued ordinances to prevent it, but it seems without much success. It is likely that the same is true for most, if not all Roman provinces. Roman administrators did likewise, especially in connection with unlawful requisitioning of goods and services. Epictetus, in his *Discourses*, advised against struggling with a soldier attempting to requisition one's mule, as it would result in a beating and the mule being taken anyway.⁹³ Petronius and Apuleius convey the same message – soldiers were universally unjust and violent. If our evidence for abuses by soldiers is substantial, so too is our evidence of attempts to curb such bad behaviour. Several edicts of Egyptian prefects concern the illegal requisitioning of transport, as do inscriptions recording governors' edicts in Asia Minor.⁹⁴ The edict of Mamertinus concerns requisitions made without a certificate, and states that because of these 'private persons are subjected to arrogance and abuse and the army has come to be censured for greed and injustice'. He insists that such practices stop and threatens severe punishment otherwise.⁹⁵ In AD 185 or 186 the governor of Syria, Julius Saturninus, similarly censured soldiers' actions in illegal requests for billeting. He issued a *programma* to the people of Phaenae telling them of his actions and directing them to place his letter in a public place to ensure their protection. Such publication of letters and

⁸⁸ Luke 3.14 = Campbell 295. ⁸⁹ Campbell (1984) 248.

⁹⁰ SB VI 9207 = Campbell 297. ⁹¹ *P Oxy.* I 240 = Campbell 296.

⁹² See McGing (1998) on *P Mich.* VI 412 (reign of Claudius); *P Oxy.* XIX 2234 (AD 31).

⁹³ Epictetus, *Discourses* 4.1.79 = Campbell 298. ⁹⁴ See generally Mitchell (1976).

⁹⁵ *PSI* 446 (AD 133–7) = Campbell 293.

orders from governors is common and gave some weight to a civilian's right to refuse illegal exactions. More often than not any threats that such orders contained were hollow, and it is likely that these letters and their public display were simply designed to appease public opinion – governors were seen to be doing something. The efficacy of the law in dealing with such matters is questionable; so too is the will of the state.

However, although soldiers might be abusive and unjust, this was not always the case. Indeed they might also ensure the protection of civilians' rights and, as we shall see below, their security. A good example of this is from an inscription from Sulmenli in Asia Minor, dating to AD 213, concerning a long-running dispute between several villages belonging to an imperial estate over contributions of transport for state officials. As we have seen this was often a source of complaint among provincial communities, but in this case they ask for a soldier to be sent so that their obligations with respect to each village can be monitored.⁹⁶

X. LEGAL STATUS OF SOLDIERS

One major difficulty for local communities was in seeking redress. What comeback did they have in the face of abuse? Soldiers were untouchable, privileged and, Campbell argues, difficult to prosecute in court.⁹⁷ Juvenal states that soldiers enjoyed much greater advantages than a civilian, and that the outcome of the case would usually be in the soldier's favour, whether in prosecution or defence.⁹⁸ While Juvenal's subject is probably the praetorian guard there is little doubt that what he claims rings true in the provinces. The received picture is therefore of the soldier as a thug, enjoying as he did legal privileges by virtue of the emperor's patronage, which made him virtually unassailable. Several salient points concerning soldiers' legal position are the lack of a right to enter into a legal marriage (before Septimius Severus), the ban on owning land in the provinces in which they served and the rights of a soldier's father over his son's property being altered so that the soldier had legal control. These issues had knock-on effects in the realms of status and inheritance. Several initiatives introduced by emperors eased the legal difficulties of soldiers in drawing up wills and receiving inheritances and gave certain legal privileges which excused them several civilian commitments, including inalienability of property until the completion of military service, and exemption from liturgical or compulsory state services.

Evidence from Egypt is important in assessing the veracity of the hostile view of soldiers and the law promoted by our literary sources. It is clear that soldiers became involved in relationships which might seem like

⁹⁶ Campbell 188.

⁹⁷ Campbell (1984) 253–4.

⁹⁸ Juv. *Satires* 16.32.

marriage; but the legal difficulties were presented by the status of any offspring, especially if the mother were a non-citizen. Alston cites three examples of legal hearings in which decisions were made against the soldier in question. He argues also for a steady erosion in the privileges accorded to soldiers in the treatment of their wills which in effect denied them the right to bequeath property to non-citizens. Any residual problems of status differences between veterans and their partners and children were resolved by the grant of *conubium* by Hadrian.

The restriction on marriage probably had its roots in military discipline and logistics, in the same way as these may have affected soldiers' rights to own property. Effectively they were not allowed to buy land. But what is clear from the Egyptian evidence is that they did, and often. It seems that practice often departed from legal entitlement and that in the interests of smooth running, a blind eye could be turned to soldiers' private dealings. The right of marriage awarded soldiers by the emperor Septimius Severus can be seen as an acceptance of the status quo.

One final issue to mention is the legal status of soldiers and social mobility and the effects of the army on the cultural identity of recruits.⁹⁹ In the second century AD the orator Aelius Aristides claimed that 'on the day they joined the army, they lost their original city, but from the very same day became fellow-citizens of your city [Rome] and its defenders'.¹⁰⁰ Joining the *auxilia* was a recognized stepping-stone to Roman citizenship and must have been attractive for its pay and ultimate reward.

All such issues of legal status are closely bound up with the relations of soldiers and veterans with local provincial communities.

XI. FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

The dynamics of soldiers' relationship with communities are complicated. While it is clear that they were bound closely through family relationships, soldiers and veterans living in provinces had wide social circles.¹⁰¹ It is only documentary evidence in the shape of papyri or wooden tablets that shed light on these aspects of a soldier's life. But within this broad category of evidence there are still problems of interpretation and disagreement over the level to which soldiers were integrated into provincial society. Much of our evidence comes from the Egyptian village of Karanis, in the Fayyum, and is archival in nature. Thus we have a good picture of life in one particular village, but this may not be representative of Egypt, or indeed the Roman empire as a whole, though it is unlikely to have been purely local. Indeed, there are many difficulties in dividing populations

⁹⁹ On this issue in the western provinces, see Haynes (1999).

¹⁰⁰ Aristid. *Or.* 26.75.

¹⁰¹ Alston (1995) 117–42; (1999); see pp. 194–5 above.

into neat cultural identities, not least, as Alston points out, because these identities may not have been clear in antiquity, either *de facto* or *de jure*, and even naming practices cannot be held to be clear evidence of ethnicity.¹⁰² What seems reasonably clear, however, is that the social circle of soldiers was diverse, aided no doubt by the fact that many of the soldiers would have been recruited in the region. Indeed it has been argued that, in the absence of military camps throughout Egypt, recruitment of the army and auxiliaries was made through village contacts among veterans and families of serving soldiers. These networks of relationships were central to the lives of soldiers, no matter where they were stationed. We have good evidence among the letters for regular correspondence between soldiers and their families, not just within Egypt, but from Italy and Syria.

Friendships made in the course of military service also provided the entrée to these communities for comrades in arms. Personal recommendation was an important aspect of life in the ancient world generally, and certainly in the army.¹⁰³ The following letter is a good example:

Receive with my recommendation the bearer of this letter, Terentianus, an honourably discharged soldier, and acquaint him with our villagers' ways, so that he isn't insulted. Since he is a man of means and wants to live there, I have urged upon him that he rent my house for this year and the next for 60 dr, and I would like to use the 120 dr to buy for me from our friend the linen-merchant by the temple in the city . . .¹⁰⁴

We know from other letters that Terentianus was the son of a veteran and that he had served in the fleet at Alexandria. Here he uses a personal contact in order to smooth his acceptance into the village of Karanis, where he eventually bought land. Social connections seem to have been very important in tenancy agreements.¹⁰⁵ One interesting impression emerges, however, and that is that, despite Alston's belief that soldiers and veterans were well integrated into village life, there seems to have been a natural barrier between them and the local population – their ways are considered rather odd by the writer. Such a climate of strain is suggested by other documents which record complaints made by veterans of beatings that they had received at the hands of Egyptians, and that their various privileges, such as exemption from liturgies, were being denied them by local officials, whether because they were forced to bend rules in order to deliver the appropriate number of liturgists or because of disaffection not being clear.¹⁰⁶ It is certain that soldiers and veterans were integrated into local communities, but we should not underestimate levels of tension between the two groups.

¹⁰² Alston (1999) 180. ¹⁰³ See Cotton (1981). ¹⁰⁴ SB VI 9636 (AD 136).

¹⁰⁵ Rowlandson (1996) 272–8.

¹⁰⁶ SB V 7523 = *Sel. Pap.* II 254 (AD 153); BGU I 180 = *Sel. Pap.* II 285 (AD 172) = Campbell 339.

Dislike and distrust of soldiers and veterans among the indigenous population, at least in Egypt, is easy to understand and is manifested on several levels. There is no reason to doubt that soldiers and veterans enjoyed a privileged existence. They had more money than their civilian counterparts, which enabled them to buy more land. Despite the ban on soldiers buying land during their service, it seems that in practice a blind eye was turned on this by the state. In addition a generous discharge bonus added to their wealth. Legionaries possessed Roman citizenship, auxiliaries obtained it upon discharge, and this brought with it legal privileges, among which exemption from poll tax was perhaps the most enviable. Veterans enjoyed exemption from liturgies for a period of five years,¹⁰⁷ and also had, *de facto*, the same rights of access to authorities, even the emperor, which ensured a privileged position in law, with the ability to seek redress with more hope of success than a civilian. Fellow villagers no doubt looked on this with envy and disaffection, and they may also have remembered the miserable treatment that they received from soldiers collecting the taxes and enforcing the will of the state.

Outside Egypt we have similar evidence for veterans. In inscriptions and papyri from Syria, they appear as wealthy landowners, local benefactors and generally wealthy individuals of local prominence. It may even be the case that veteran settlement changed the economic and agricultural development of regions.¹⁰⁸ There is little doubt, however, that veteran settlement and its effect on local society varied in different parts of the empire, just as did the economic effects of the army generally.

XII. THE ROLE OF THE ARMY IN THE PROVINCES

The principal role of the army was to fight wars. But wars, on balance, rarely affected daily life in provinces, so the army's secondary function, the maintenance of law and order, was an important feature of provincial life.¹⁰⁹ Guard duty and surveillance took up much of the army's time: Ps.-Hyginus, writing in the first or second century, stated that about 20 per cent of a legion might be on such duty at any time during a night.¹¹⁰ Documentary evidence from Dura-Europus and Egypt corroborates this.¹¹¹ Guard duty included watching the army camp and also manning outposts in the provinces. Commitments of soldiers to such duties were long standing, and soldiers could find themselves serving at the same post for years. A good example of this is that of Aelius Dubitatus, a member of the ninth praetorian cohort, based in Numidia during the third century AD who

¹⁰⁷ See for example *BGU* 1 180 = *Sel. Pap.* 11 285 (AD 172) = Campbell 339.

¹⁰⁸ Fentress (1979) 150–60.

¹⁰⁹ See Isaac (1990) *passim*, but especially 54–100; Alston (1995) 81–6; Pollard (2000) 96–9.

¹¹⁰ Ps.-Hyginus *De munitionibus castrorum* 1. ¹¹¹ *RMR* 12–19 and 51 for examples from Egypt.

guarded the staging post at Veneria Rustica for nine years.¹¹² Some posts were, no doubt, more pleasant than others.

Such activities could be so demanding that the efficiency of a garrison as a fighting force could be affected. But one of the most important tasks of the army was the upkeep of peace and law and order within each province – the army did not sit idle, waiting for revolt or external attack. It was an important duty of the provincial governor to ensure law and order in his province.¹¹³ Banditry was a serious problem, for which there is copious evidence.¹¹⁴

A series of ostraca from Upper Egypt provide evidence for the daily duties and lives of soldiers on outpost duties. Several documents provide lists of individuals on watchtower duty, presumably protecting desert routes, and other documents provide evidence for the supply of units guarding watering points along desert routes.¹¹⁵ Travel along these routes seems to have been carefully regulated, with passes (*pittakia*) being issued, and charges were made for the use of the roads.¹¹⁶ Watchtowers were also set up in the Nile valley, possibly for the protection of caravans carrying grain, but also to protect villages from banditry, which seems to have been rife in Egypt if we are to believe our literary sources (who did not generally think much of Egyptians), especially in times of economic hardship. Documentary evidence, while less colourful, is probably more reliable. A group of papyri from the Egyptian village of Thmouis in the delta, which dates to the AD 160s, illustrate a period of extreme economic pressure, exacerbated by low Nile floods and, perhaps more drastically, plague. This led to a steep decline in population, increased pressure to keep paying taxes, and flight from such responsibilities (*anachoresis*).¹¹⁷

Centurions and decurions, when necessary, could be dispatched to investigate crimes, and in Egypt centurions became a regular feature of the maintenance of law and order throughout the countryside (*chora*).¹¹⁸ In other, less problematic provinces, soldiers with special duties, such as *beneficiarii* or *stationarii*, took on such tasks when they were not in the hands of local magistrates.¹¹⁹

¹¹² *ILS* 9073 = Campbell 187.

¹¹³ Ulp. 1.18.13. For an example in practice, see *BGU* 1 372 (AD 154) with *P Fay.* 24 (AD 158).

¹¹⁴ See MacMullen (1966); Shaw (1984); and more recently, McGing (1998).

¹¹⁵ Bagnall (1977) and (1982); Alston (1995); Adams (1999) on supply. Bagnall (1977) concludes that watchtowers were often manned by civilians, which cannot be ruled out; see *O Claud.* 1 175 (early second century). It is certain that soldiers often performed such duties, and outside of Egypt this might certainly be the case, in the absence of a developed system of liturgies.

¹¹⁶ *Pittakia*, see *O Claud.* 1 48–82; charges, *OGIS* 671 (AD 90).

¹¹⁷ On the Antonine plague, see Duncan-Jones (1996); on *anachoresis*, see Lewis (1993).

¹¹⁸ See Alston (1995) 86–96.

¹¹⁹ Davies (1974a); Austin and Rankov (1995) s.v. *beneficiarii* and *stationarii*.

Troops were stationed throughout provinces, largely in the countryside, unless certain cities were considered to be trouble spots – Alexandria, and the cities of Jerusalem, Caesarea and Byzantium are good examples. Duties ranged from guarding harbour facilities and granaries, to guarding individuals during trials.

XIII. THE ARMY AND INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION

Whether the army was viewed as an occupying army or a peacekeeping force, it was the most tangible evidence of Roman control in a province. It was the natural extension of Roman authority and thus, in the absence of a large provincial bureaucracy, it had a role to play in the internal administration of a province. Not surprisingly local communities tried to maintain good relations with soldiers, often through the public voting of honours in the form of votive inscriptions which name them as ‘friends and benefactors’.¹²⁰ More senior officers were engaged in the dispensation of justice. Clearly some provincial governors were also military commanders (the governors of Syria for example), so they would naturally deal with legal matters in the course of their duties. There is evidence for procurators and military prefects having such roles delegated to them. There are also cases of soldiers being attached to the staff of the provincial governor, appointments which brought seniority and influence.

Soldiers were allocated tasks that required a strong arm. Evidence, primarily from Egypt but also from Dura-Europus and Syria, exists for them supervising local markets, especially the weighing of goods for sale.¹²¹ They might also supervise the weighing of state grain, or act as guards on grain ships.¹²² Soldiers were often attached to the staff of local officials such as procurators, not only to provide security, but in clerical roles where their administrative experience could be useful.¹²³ Perhaps most important, and least surprising, was the role of soldiers in tax collection in the provinces. This is well documented in the papyrological record in Egypt. Soldiers manned customs points throughout the empire, directly in support of civilian tax-collectors. In fact it seems that it was common for soldiers to spend considerable periods of time away from their units on such duties.¹²⁴

XIV. THE ARMY AS A WORKFORCE

The Roman army had among its ranks many soldiers with experience in building and engineering. There is little doubt that these skills were

¹²⁰ See Pollard (2000) 88. ¹²¹ *CIL* VIII 18219 = *ILS* 2415.

¹²² See generally MacMullen (1963) for the third century AD and beyond; Alston (1995). 79–81

¹²³ Pollard (2000) 100–4, citing *Plin. Ep.* 10.27 where soldiers are appointed to the staff of an imperial freedman in the employ of a procurator.

¹²⁴ The best evidence for this is *CPapLat* 106 = *RMR* 10 = Campbell 184.

generated in response to the army's own requirements for the construction of forts, accommodation and of course roads for its own use.¹²⁵ Any advantage to the civilian population in the provinces derived from military facilities was incidental, but there is no doubt that roads and bridges benefited them greatly. There is evidence for soldiers being employed more generally in construction projects in the provinces.¹²⁶ But it is likely that, because of their technical skills, surveyors, engineers and craftsmen were quite widely employed, but that ordinary soldiers were only used occasionally for provincial building projects.¹²⁷ It is often difficult, however, to separate military and civilian building projects, and the role of soldiers in civilian projects is difficult to gauge: state interests often lay behind such projects. It is clear also that emperors carefully guarded the use of soldiers in such activities, for in the *Digest* laws governing this are preserved: leave to soldiers was ideally to be granted sparingly (presumably to discourage them becoming involved in private projects), and in a law of Augustus it was laid down that:

Although I know that it is not inappropriate for soldiers to be occupied in building work, I am nevertheless afraid that if I grant permission for anything to be done which might be in my interest or yours, it would not be done in a fashion which would be acceptable to me.¹²⁸

But elsewhere in the *Digest* Ulpian notes that provincial governors had a responsibility for the upkeep of buildings in the provinces and should appoint soldiers to assist in inspections of buildings if necessary.¹²⁹

Epigraphic and papyrological evidence clearly shows that soldiers were involved in provincial building projects and other forms of economic activities, such as the supervision of quarries and mines and the production of metalwork. Milestones are testament to the manifold road-building schemes throughout the provinces, and many mention the use of soldiers at imperial command. These also might open up new areas for military or economic control – the building of a road from Syria to the Red Sea by Trajan is a good example, as is the *via Hadriana* linking the Nile to the Red Sea.¹³⁰ Specialist military surveyors and architects are requested by Pliny in Bithynia–Pontus, in the course of his duties supervising building and improving the province's communication network.¹³¹ The army seems to have had specialists in various crafts, such as stonemasons and builders among others.¹³² We have examples of these soldiers engaged in the repair of city walls in Syria and Mesopotamia and building walls for the colony

¹²⁵ On the role of the army in road-building, see Kissel (2002) 155–7.

¹²⁶ The evidence is collected by MacMullen (1959) and discussed by Pollard (2000) 242–9.

¹²⁷ Suet. *Aug.* 28; *SHA, Prob.* 9 for soldiers engaged in the maintenance of irrigation channels which had fallen into disrepair, although we should note the striking similarity between the two accounts.

¹²⁸ *Dig.* 49.16.12.1 = Campbell 192. ¹²⁹ *Dig.* 1.16.7.1 = Campbell 193.

¹³⁰ *ILS* 5834 = Campbell 198; *IGRom.* 1142 = *OGIS* 701. ¹³¹ Plin. *Ep.* 10. 41.

¹³² Stonemasons – *AE* 1973. 473 = Campbell 200; builders – *CIL* x 3479 = Campbell 195.

of Romula in Dacia.¹³³ We know from evidence from the eastern desert of Egypt, and especially from Mons Claudianus, that soldiers were engaged in the protection of imperial quarries and desert routes, and it is likely also that they added welcome engineering skill to quarry work and the transport of stone. The lot of ordinary soldiers was probably better than that of civilians working in these conditions, and that of army officers better still. An interesting letter written by a soldier (a legionary accountant) stationed at quarries in Bostra in Arabia to his family in the Egyptian village of Karanis illustrates this: 'I give thanks to Sarapis and Good Fortune that while all are labouring the whole day through at cutting stones, I as an officer move about doing nothing.'¹³⁴

All of this opens up the broader issue of the role of the army in the upkeep of provincial infrastructures and of state investment in provinces. It may be that some profits from taxation were reinvested by Rome in the infrastructure of the provinces, and the army did participate in building projects. It is certainly the case, however, that reinvestment never made up for the systematic exploitation of the provinces, both through taxation and the draining of natural resources. The army's involvement in building in the provinces was largely connected to the state's own interests, and any benefits to the provinces purely incidental.

XV. SOLDIERS AND REGIONAL ECONOMIES: SUPPLY AND TRADE

The distribution of the legions over provinces and within provinces meant that there was no universal system of supply. The army was certainly not self-sufficient, although soldiers did produce a small amount of food on the land attached to camps (*territorium*) or perhaps through small-time gardening. This can be seen at Vindolanda, and is evidenced by the writing tablets.¹³⁵ Soldiers had direct responsibility for the upkeep and production of agricultural land attached to the fort, and for the maintenance of livestock. However, as in other regions of the empire, it is unlikely that direct cultivation and animal husbandry by the army could cater for all its needs – it required large quantities of grain, meat, other foodstuffs, wine, water (in desert outposts), animals, clothing, weapons and other commodities. A considerable portion of military supplies came from tax payments made in kind in the provinces, but by no means all. The army came to constitute a real focus for trade, both local and long distance.¹³⁶ Its demands were considerable – perhaps as much as 150,000 tonnes of grain alone by the end of the second century AD.¹³⁷ Evidence from Egyptian papyri sheds

¹³³ Pollard (2000) 244–5; Dacia, *ILS* 510 = Campbell 203. ¹³⁴ *P Mich.* VIII 465 (AD 107).

¹³⁵ See Bowman (1994) 44–45. ¹³⁶ Hopkins (1980); Middleton (1983).

¹³⁷ Garnsey and Saller (1987) 88–95.

considerable light on the supply system, and while such a system had regional and local variations in practice, similar evidence from Bu Njem in Libya, other parts of the Near East and from Vindolanda in Britain, enables us to compare military supply systems to some degree.

The system for supplying armies was central to military life. During the Republic campaigning armies relied on two levels of supply – those brought in from outside the operational region, and those derived from it by requisition or foraging.¹³⁸ But as armies began to become more permanently based in particular regions, a pattern which began in the late Republic, more complicated mechanisms of supply had to be developed. By the imperial period, and certainly by the end of the second century AD, legions became almost permanently based in particular provinces. Supplying legionary bases was obviously a priority, but the picture becomes more complicated with the fragmentation of legions into smaller units, and the outposting of soldiers, clearly shown in duty rosters from Dura and one from Vindolanda.¹³⁹ This fragmentation arguably aided Rome's firm control of territory – units could quickly respond to limited local threats. Efficient communication between units (and here we see the importance of communication, and indeed literacy, to the development and upkeep of the Roman empire) could ensure this. But not only that, efficient communication and record-keeping were essential to supplying the army with its needs. What marks the period of the Roman Republic from that of the Empire is the profound importance of record-keeping – it is an accident of preservation which has provided documentary evidence for military supply in Egypt, Syria and Britain, but clearly documents of this kind saw much greater use under the standing, professional army of the imperial period.¹⁴⁰

How, then, were military units supplied? Our evidence consists in part of isolated references in literary sources; these are profuse for the late Republican wars, but logistics were not a central concern for them, while for the imperial period our literary sources are very limited and only incidental details are preserved. Sub-literary texts or technical handbooks, such as Vegetius' *Epitome of Military Science*, preserve ideals, but not structural detail. For evidence of how supply systems work, we must turn to papyri from Egypt and Syria and wooden tables from Vindolanda in Britain.

For Roman Egypt there has been a trend towards seeing the supply system as essentially an *ad hoc* demand for and supply of staple foods.¹⁴¹ But this has avoided the issue of bureaucracy, and most especially the very tight control exercised by state authorities over the requisition of goods and services.¹⁴² The system of supply seems to have followed the following basic format:

¹³⁸ See Roth (1999) and Erdkamp (1998) *passim*.

¹³⁹ Sample the duty registers collected by RMR, especially 14–16; *T.Vindol.* 1 154.

¹⁴⁰ Adams (2001) 466. ¹⁴¹ For Egypt, see Alston (1995) 110–12. ¹⁴² Adams (1999).

the military commander assessed the needs of his troops and formulated lists of his demands; these were sent to the provincial governor for his approval before any requisition was made, as we know from a number of sources that tight controls were exercised over requisition. Once approval had been given soldiers were given the task of collecting the supplies they needed. The army's requirements were divided up among the nomes and their villages by the senior nome officials, the *strategoi*, which indicates significant bureaucratic and central control over the system. Soldiers with specific supply duties collected the goods and organized their transport to the military units.¹⁴³ Our evidence shows that, contrary to what we might expect, grain was transported considerable distances, although it is certainly possible that in this respect Egypt may have been different to other provinces, given its importance to the grain supply of the Roman world generally and the fact that the Nile served as an ideal transport highway.

Long-distance transport was necessary also for desert outposts. Caravans regularly supplied locations in the western desert such as Douch, and watering stations along the eastern desert routes. In these cases civilian transporters seem to have carried supplies in some instances.¹⁴⁴ It is difficult to establish how important the role played by civilians in the system of military supply was, as our evidence is rarely specific on such an issue. Civilian contractors may be involved in the procurement of grain and other supplies in quite a number of documents. Outside Egypt the situation was similar. Ostraca from the fort at Bu Njem in Libya show significant caravan activity, with large amounts of grain being transported considerable distances, most probably by civilians.

To what extent were soldiers involved? We have some indication from duty rosters, and most importantly from one preserved on a papyrus from Egypt which relates to the *cohors I Veterana Hispanorum equitata*, based in Stobi in Macedonia at the time when the document was written.¹⁴⁵ In this document we see soldiers, on detachment to obtain grain and fodder, procuring livestock. Some were detached outside the province of Macedonia, others within. In one particularly interesting example from Egypt, which concerns the procurement of hay intended for disbursement as fodder to a *turma*, a member of the unit (who styles himself with the unmilitary title 'procurator') writes to the hay contractors (*conductores faenarii* – who

¹⁴³ The best example of the system is *P Amb.* II 107 (AD 185), which forms part of a larger archive of documents relating to the *strategos* Damarion, many of which concern military supply. See Adams (1999) and Daris (1992).

¹⁴⁴ Sample the material collected in *O Douch* I–V. For the eastern desert, see *O Petr.* 245, with Adams (1996).

¹⁴⁵ *RMR* 63 = Campbell 183 (AD 105 or 106). The document is no longer considered a *pridianum*, but an extraordinary strength report drawn up during the Dacian wars and used to draft a *pridianum*. Presumably it was taken to Egypt by its recipient.

were most likely civilians), to say that he had paid for the freight charges himself. No doubt he would be reimbursed.¹⁴⁶

What this shows is that there was probably no universal system of supply, but that it was determined by local conditions of both bureaucracy and economy. Additionally it is very difficult to distinguish between military personnel and civilians in our evidence, and only in a very small number of cases can we be sure of the status of an individual. However, we should perhaps not trouble too much about this, as we shall see that the army in the provinces very quickly moulded itself into the economic life of its regional base, attracting traders, merchants and suppliers to communities built around camps and forts.

The army became a focus of trade. It is probable that such trade was primarily local in nature, and certainly the presence of an army unit in any locality would have encouraged production of both staple goods and other commodities. While this form of trade was predominant there is evidence to suggest that certain items were transported very long distances to cater for the tastes of soldiers, who we should remember were often from different parts of the empire than where they were stationed, and had a considerable income in comparison to their civilian counterparts. Wooden tablets from Vindolanda near Hadrian's Wall in Britain preserve documents remarkably similar to those we find on Egyptian papyri, and incidentally show that military documentary practice was standard throughout the empire, whether in Latin or Greek. Wine from Gaul seems to have been favoured, perhaps not surprisingly, over local beverages, and on one tablet a man describes himself as a *hominem trasmarinum* (a man from across the sea), which suggests that he may have been a merchant. Amphorae from the quarries at Mons Claudianus, deep within the eastern desert of Egypt, show that wines were transported there from Italy and Gaul, and ostraca show a considerable amount of trade at this remote location.¹⁴⁷

At a more local level the presence of soldiers could have a profound effect upon the economy – the army created 'networks of contact that resulted in the interplay of Roman and native groups'.¹⁴⁸ Apart from Egypt, some of our best evidence for this comes from Roman Britain, where we see what Bowman describes as a 'flexible and sophisticated "local economy"'.¹⁴⁹ Evidence from the Vindolanda tablets shows commodities of a diverse nature, from luxury items such as Massic wine from Campania to the more mundane apple, being consumed by the commanding officers of the garrison. What is striking is that, although many items are imported in order to cater for more Mediterranean tastes, many local commodities are consumed. But

¹⁴⁶ *P Lond.* 1 482 = *RMR* 80 = Campbell 236 (AD 130).

¹⁴⁷ Tomber (1996); van der Veen (1998); *O Claud.* 1 137–71 (second century).

¹⁴⁸ Middleton (1983) 75. ¹⁴⁹ Bowman (1994) 68. See most recently Whittaker (2002).

these items seem not to have been requisitioned, as cash is paid for them, and the tablets suggest a flourishing local trade at markets. The frequent reference to clothing at Vindolanda raises the question of the supply of garments to the army and the broader issue of how self-contained military units might be. It is probable that local manufacturers provided almost all of the clothing needed by the army in Roman Britain, and it is likely that the local climate determined local clothing – cloaks for use in northern Britain would be of little use in the deserts of Syria. Papyri from Egypt show a similar pattern: in one text an individual with the liturgical task of delivering a consignment of blankets for *legio II Traiana Fortis* based at Alexandria was detained longer than he expected.¹⁵⁰ However, localities that specialized in the production of textiles were expected to provide clothing for troops serving elsewhere, as is shown in a papyrus from Philadelphia in Egypt, which preserves particularly interesting details on the nature of military clothing and the price paid by the state.¹⁵¹ Rather more specialized items could be requested – such as spear shafts or other wooden components.¹⁵²

XVI. CITIES, *CANABAE* AND *VICI*

In the Roman east military units were situated within or near urban centres. This precipitated unsurprising criticism in the ancient sources – garrisons in the east enjoyed the lavish comfort of city life, while western legions lived in tents. In the west, as we shall see, military sites were eventually to turn into urban centres (see p. 196 above). In the east the opposite was the case. This had an effect on the creation and distribution of military forts, which tend to be less common.¹⁵³ Our best evidence for the relations between cities and the military comes from Dura-Europus, which was occupied between AD 165 and 256.¹⁵⁴ It is clear that the military presence had a profound effect on the economic and social life of the city, the more so because military personnel were billeted within the city walls. The result of basing the army in cities was that the army had much less influence or impact on the everyday life of the rural regions of eastern provinces. But it is fair to say that the eastern provinces were generally much more developed and set in their ways than the western, which were more malleable in their societal fabric. It is arguable, however, that the effects were the same. In the west, with the creation of a provincial landscape, the Romans, through the establishment of urban centres based around military units, could control regions more easily. In the eastern provinces these urban centres were already established, so it was logical to base military units in these strategic cities. It seems clear though that both cities and military benefited from this arrangement.

¹⁵⁰ *P Oxy.* xxxvi 2760 (AD 179/80).

¹⁵¹ *BGU* vii 1564 = *Sel. Pap.* ii 395 = Campbell 239 (AD 138).

¹⁵² Campbell 238; *T.Vindol.* ii 309. ¹⁵³ Isaac (1990) 133.

¹⁵⁴ The most recent treatment is Pollard (2000) *passim*.

So the important difference between military organization in the Roman east generally and elsewhere in the Roman empire was that military bases in the east tended to be located in existing cities, while in the western provinces, which were characterized by lower levels of urbanization, garrisons were placed where there were no existing cities, and thus communities tended to spring up near army camps.¹⁵⁵ These camps were usually located at important strategic locations, and lines of communication and elaborate systems of fortification developed. Armies attracted traders who wished to profit both from the soldiers' desire to be distracted from the rigours of military life and their ability to pay for it. Such settlements began haphazardly, but as legions developed or acquired semi-permanent bases they became more sophisticated and may also have benefited from the building and planning expertise of the army, as evident in some grid plans. With increased sophistication came the development of quasi-municipal structures – magistrates appointed by and responsible to local military commanders, as *canabae*, settlements of Roman citizens, were built on the *territorium legionis*.¹⁵⁶ Non-Romans settled around camps in *vici*, which seem generally to have been smaller in size than *canabae*. Although *vici* seem to have developed near almost every garrisoned fort there is no consensus on the nature of their development or whether they were established more or less simultaneously.

Communication was of clear importance, not just to the establishing of forts, but also to their associated settlements. There is therefore a link between the layout of *vici* and local road networks.¹⁵⁷ This must also connect such settlements and forts to the annexation of provinces and the exertion of control over space.¹⁵⁸ For example, in south-west Germany all *vici* and forts lie on new sites, with no sign of earlier occupation, and there is a tendency for settlements to develop slightly later than their associated forts, which suggests annexation and pacification before settlement.¹⁵⁹ The pattern seems to be of a spread of urban centres based on military forts, which provided markets, distribution centres and even administrative centres located at intervals through the province. These settlements were thus central to the development of the urban landscapes of Roman provinces.

XVII. CONCLUSION

Warfare was central to Roman society. During the Republic, Roman citizens and their allies benefited materially and territorially. Perhaps more importantly Roman aristocrats pursued policies designed to enhance personal prestige and gain, and all of this had a profound effect on the politics,

¹⁵⁵ On the army and urbanization in Britain, see Millet (1990); on Syria see Pollard (2000).

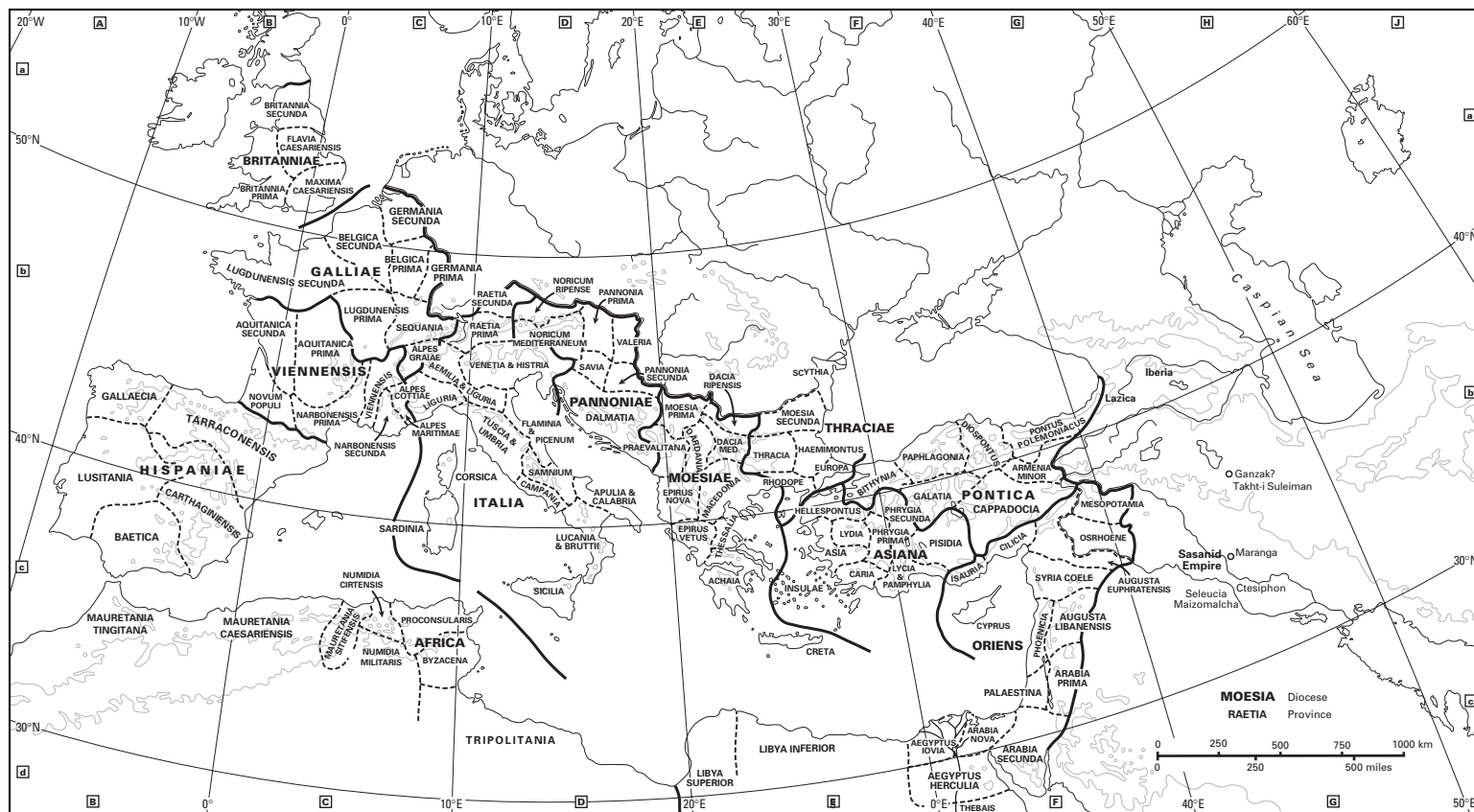
¹⁵⁶ MacMullen (1963) 119–24. ¹⁵⁷ Sommer (1999).

¹⁵⁸ See Purcell (1990) for the creation of a provincial landscape.

¹⁵⁹ Sommer (1999) argues for an almost planned settlement and colonization of south-west Germany.

society and economy of Republican Rome and Italy, sometimes to the good, sometimes not. Ultimately, though, competition for prestige, office and power was to lead to the collapse of the Republic. Arguably the logical outcome of the power struggles of the last century BC was the creation of autocratic government. This resulted in an entirely different environment for warfare and a similarly different effect on society. In the Republic while wars may have brought devastation this was probably of much less significance in itself than in its effect on the social fabric of society. In the imperial period, with the presence of a standing army in the provinces, the effect on society can only have been more profound. From cities to rural villages the army represented the visible power of Rome. It policed the empire, but also created the environment enabling a vibrant economy to develop. The presence of the army helped to create the provincial landscapes of the Roman world.

PART II
THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE



Map 7. The provinces under Diocletian.

CHAPTER 7

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MARK HUMPHRIES

I. THEODOSIUS I AT CONSTANTINOPLE AND ROME

In 390 Constantinople's urban prefect Proculus erected an Egyptian obelisk on the central spine of the city's hippodrome to celebrate the recent victory of the reigning emperor Theodosius I over the western usurper Magnus Maximus.¹ The granite monolith was supported by a marble plinth decorated with reliefs showing Theodosius with his court presiding, appropriately enough, over circus spectacles. On the west face (see fig. 7.1) Theodosius, together with his fellow emperors Valentinian II, Arcadius and Honorius, is seated in the imperial box and flanked by guardsmen and court officials. Below them approach, crouching in attitudes of supplication, two groups of barbarian envoys, each distinguished by stereotypical clothing, Persians on the left, western foes on the right.² The relief is a potent statement of imperial ideology, the effortless dominance of the *imperium Romanum* over its neighbours: the emperors sit calm and majestic, while their enemies, by contrast, cower in subjugation.

Proculus was not the only loyal servant of the emperor to connect celebration of the victory over Maximus with the Empire's superiority over its barbarian neighbours. Around the same time Theodosius himself, on a visit to Rome, listened to the panegyrist Pacatus celebrate this victory and restoration of unity to the empire; Pacatus also reflected on Theodosius' dealings with the barbarians. When Theodosius had been appointed to the throne, Pacatus observed, 'the state was lying grievously afflicted, or, should I say, rendered lifeless, by innumerable ills, and barbarian peoples had flowed over Roman territory like a flood'. Yet Theodosius had remedied the situation since his victorious army now contained large numbers of barbarian recruits who 'followed standards which they had once opposed,

The major recent studies of the subject matter of this chapter are Blockley (1992), (1998); Lee (1993b); and the essays in Shepard and Franklin (1992); for the post-Roman west, Gillett (2003). There remains much of use in Helm (1932).

¹ Marc. Com. *Chron.* s.a. 390.3; *CIL* III.737. Cf. *PLRE* I.746–7, Proculus 6.

² McCormack (1981) 56–7.



Figure 7.1 Relief from the base of Theodosius' obelisk in the hippodrome of Constantinople depicting Theodosius I, seated with co-emperors Valentinian II, Arcadius and Honorius, receiving kneeling foreign envoys.

and filled with soldiers the cities of Pannonia which they had not long ago emptied by hostile plundering'. Furthermore, 'there was no disorder, no confusion, and no looting, as was customary among barbarians' (*Pan. Lat.* 2 (12)3.3, 2 (12).32.3–4).

Such self-confident assertions of imperial superiority turned out to be hollow indeed. Those same barbarian troops were soon to become embroiled in a series of conflicts that would seriously undermine the stability of the empire and eventually produce a very different balance of power between the empire and its neighbours. It is this changing balance of power in late antiquity and its ramifications for imperial foreign relations that this chapter sets out to trace. The reign of Theodosius I provides an appropriate moment at which to throw these developments into high relief. He was, though he can hardly have known it, the last emperor to rule over a united Roman empire, stretching from Britain to the Sahara, and from Spain to the Near East. He thus stands at the end of a line of emperors for whom imperial unity and universal supremacy – precisely those aspirations advertised on the obelisk base and in Pacatus' panegyric – were more or less realistic ambitions. After him came a sequence of rulers whom the twin

spectres of unity and universalism continued to haunt, but whose ability to achieve them was continually frustrated by strategic considerations and limited resources.

II. LATE ANTIQUE GEOPOLITICS: THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND ITS ENEMIES

Before examining the mechanics of international relations it is necessary to set them in the broader context of shifting geopolitics in the late Roman period. Perhaps the chief characteristic of this era was the retreat of the imperial frontiers and the establishment within them of new polities by non-Roman peoples. There is a danger that this process can seem precipitate when, for example, Rome's Mediterranean empire at Diocletian's accession in 284 is compared with that of the much smaller state confined to the Balkans and Asia Minor that remained at the death of Heraclius in 641. Such comparisons assume that the territorial limits achieved by the Empire at its height should be regarded as somehow normal, even preordained, and that the Empire's major concern in its foreign policy was the maintenance of those limits.³ It is also easy for teleological assumptions to dominate any narrative of the Empire's fortunes in late antiquity. Such a narrative might see potential collapse in the third century AD followed by the restoration of stability under Diocletian, and then the balance of power beginning to shift in favour of Rome's enemies after Valens' defeat by the Goths at Adrianople in 378. Thereafter the Empire was consistently on the retreat with any territorial expansion, e.g. the Justinianic reconquests, only serving to weaken it and lay it open to further dismemberment.

There is admittedly much in this picture that is true, but none of the trends just described was a simple, linear process. Abandonment of imperial territory had occurred before late antiquity, while aggressive foreign wars continued to be fought. But any understanding of the changing territorial limits of the empire, if it is not to seem overtly catastrophic, must be set in a context that takes account of factors that facilitated or limited Rome's ambitions with regard to its enemies. The Roman ability to pursue an effective foreign policy could be seriously circumscribed by limited resources. Diocletian's currency and prices edicts showed a concerted imperial effort to assert greater control over the deployment of resources. Later in the fourth century the anonymous author of the *De rebus bellicis* tied defensive concerns to problems of revenue (5.1); at the end of the fifth century, the Senate of Constantinople voiced similar complaints to Zeno (Malchus fr. 15). Just as fiscal resources were beginning to show signs of strain military manpower, even if it was by no means yet in short supply, was nevertheless

³ Isaac (1992) 373–418.

coming under pressure.⁴ Such constraints on resources became especially acute when the Empire was confronted by a number of different threats at once.

Such limitations may well explain the Empire's collapse in the west in the fifth century as it sought to meet the needs of constant defence against a multiplicity of enemies from an ever-diminishing pool of fiscal and military resources.⁵ Even in the fourth century, when the Empire was still able to muster large numbers of troops, it was often impossible to fight simultaneous wars on different frontiers: in 374 Sarmatian and Quadi attacks on Pannonia terminated Valentinian I's campaigns along the Rhine (*Amm. Marc.* 30.3.2–3).⁶ The resources of the east were not inexhaustible. Justinian's reconquests over-stretched the capacity of the eastern army, particularly in terms of the financial base upon which military activity depended; outbreaks of the plague after 541 further undermined the east's resilience.⁷ Under Justinian's successors money and personnel were overstretched in periods when the empire was fighting several wars at once. Tiberius II was unable to commit the required forces against the Avars because his armies were campaigning in the east, and when he sought to end his Persian war in 582 the Persian ambassador pointed out that the Romans were in a weak position because they were fighting on so many frontiers (*Men. Prot. fr.* 25.2, 26.1). In the late sixth and the seventh centuries the repercussions for the integrity of the empire became all too apparent, particularly in terms of the threat along the lower Danube.⁸ By the end of the seventh century considerable stretches of the Balkans and Greece were all but lost to the Empire, with imperial power limited to Constantinople's Thracian hinterland and a few coastal possessions around Thessalonica and in the south. Meanwhile in the eastern provinces Heraclius' devastating wars against Sasanid Persia in the 620s left the empire exhausted and easy prey for the Muslim armies that soon emerged out of Arabia.

Nor was the empire always able to mount a united response to such outside threats. The problem of usurpation, endemic in late antiquity, drained internal resources and undermined ambitions. Thus Constantius II's plans for war with Persia were repeatedly thwarted by western rebellions, and Valentinian I was compelled to rethink his strategic priorities in the west when his eastern colleague Valens was challenged by Procopius. Internal and external crises could become intertwined. Already in the third century the failure of the central authority to deal with invasions across the Rhine and Near Eastern frontiers had resulted in the establishment of separatist regimes in Gaul and Palmyra. The situation became more protracted in the fifth century in the west. While the regime of Honorius was distracted by

⁴ Elton (1996b) 152–4; Whitby (2000b) 307–8. ⁵ Elton (1996b) 13, cf. 118–27.

⁶ Cf. Blockley (1992) 111–12. ⁷ Whitby (2000b) 306–8. ⁸ Whitby (2000c) 720–1.

Gothic invasions of Italy after 401, the north-western provinces, dismayed by apparent imperial neglect of their security, threw up a string of usurpers; for his own part, Honorius was compelled to accept the Gallic usurper Constantine III as co-emperor in 407 because problems in Italy prevented him from doing otherwise (Olymp. fr. 13.1). For many of the middle years of the fifth century, particularly around the time of the invasions of Attila's Huns, different regional interest groups, dominated by the aristocracies of Gaul and Italy, were caught up in rivalries about whose priorities should prevail when it came to deploying imperial resources.⁹ In the east the usurpations of Phocas (602) and Heraclius (610) each facilitated enemy attacks.

The division of the Empire at the death of Theodosius I in 395 into western and eastern halves created difficulties. Although imperial propaganda insisted on the unity of the state the problems faced by the west did not meet with a concerted response from the east. Relations between the two parts of the Empire were often strained. Until 408 the western emperor Honorius' *magister militum* Stilicho seemed more interested in asserting his influence over the east than in dealing with threats to western security. When Constantinople established its own appointee Anthemius (467–72) on the western throne, this provoked a hostile reception from the *magister militum* Ricimer in Italy. Moreover eastern emperors had to contend with problems of their own, such as the emerging Ostrogothic power in the Balkans and the perennial threat of brigandage among the peoples in the mountains of eastern Asia Minor. Also, even if Sasanid Persia was on the whole quiescent for most of the fifth century, the eastern frontier remained an important outlet for Constantinopolitan emperors' foreign ambitions. Interventions in the west did occur but were rarely successful. The naval expedition against the Vandals in 441 was recalled when the Huns invaded Thrace the following year.¹⁰ Another huge fleet, sent by Leo I in 468, was completely destroyed; the cost of this loss was immense and even a century later was recalled as nearly rendering the eastern Empire bankrupt.¹¹ In such circumstances most eastern emperors were either unwilling or simply unable to intervene in western affairs.

If the contraction of the empire is suggestive of imperial shortcomings, so too it would appear to imply that Rome's enemies enjoyed an increased capacity for success. In turn, this could lead to assumptions that the peoples against whom the Empire found itself ranged in late antiquity were qualitatively different from those whom it faced in earlier centuries, particularly in terms of greater organizational sophistication and political stability. Such

⁹ Humphries (2000) 526–7.

¹⁰ Theophanes, *Chron.* 101.21–4, 102.13–103.6 (AM 5941–2); cf. Marc. Com. *Chron.* s.a. 441.1 and 3 for further pressures at this time; Blockley (1992) 61–2.

¹¹ Procop. *Wars* 3.6; John Lydus, *Mag.* 3.44; cf. Hendy (1985) 221, 223 for analysis.

presuppositions play a significant part in the traditional narratives of the period, but need to be subjected to scrutiny if late antique international relations are not to be misinterpreted. A fundamental given of modern international relations is interaction between stable states; but for all the tendencies towards confederation and state formation that had occurred, this condition did not exist among most peoples living across the empire's frontiers. It has been assumed, for example, that in the world beyond the Rhine frontier there was a significant realignment of tribal units during the third century as confederations such as the Franks and Alamanni emerged and absorbed many of the smaller political units of earlier centuries. Yet it is possible to exaggerate the cogency of the western Germanic peoples in fourth and later centuries.¹² The smaller units of earlier times did not disappear entirely. As is clear from Ammianus Marcellinus' account of the various Alamannic invasions across the Rhine in the fourth century, such Germanic hostings were often led by a number of different kings working in concert.¹³ A similar situation seems to have obtained among the Gothic tribes beyond the lower Danube. Although there was a tendency towards broad confederations among them this was held in tension by the persistence of more localized power structures. The Hunnic onslaught of the 370s first caused the Goths to coalesce, but when the Greuthungi were overwhelmed small groups emerged under a variety of leaders.

The array of peoples who faced the Empire was subject to constant change in late antiquity. This was particularly apparent along the middle and lower Danube. The Goths migrated there in the third century but were largely displaced by the arrival of the Huns *c.* 400. For a century thereafter the geopolitics of the empire's northern frontier was dominated by dealings with various Hunnic and Gothic groups. The influence of the Huns disintegrated after Attila's death in 453, leading to a fragmentation – though not a diminution – of the threat on the Danube.¹⁴ Among these the Ostrogoths posed immediate problems for the Romans. They were induced to migrate to Italy by Zeno in 489, but this brought no respite for the Empire as various groups – Gepids, Lombards and Heruls – jockeyed for position in eastern and central Europe. By the sixth century they were joined by Kotrigur and Utigur Bulgars and the Slavs, and later by the Avars.¹⁵ Following the collapse of Avar ascendancy, a conglomeration of Slavic peoples came to dominate affairs in the Balkans, followed, by the end of the seventh century, by a variety of west Turkic groups, among them Bulgars and Khazars.¹⁶ Similar shifts in the balance of power may also be observed in the west after the end of Roman rule there. The Visigoths,

¹² Any appeal to archaeological evidence to show political realignment is fruitless: Todd (1998) 461–3.

¹³ Elton (1996b) 35, 38, 72–3.

¹⁴ Heather (1995).

¹⁵ Whitby (2000c) 714–21.

¹⁶ Obolensky (1994) 32–5.

for example, first carved out a polity in southern Gaul, whence they were later displaced by the Franks; however, Visigothic power endured in Spain from the fifth century until the eighth. Similarly the Vandal and Ostrogothic kingdoms in Africa and Italy were destroyed by Justinian's reconquests, but in turn both territories were invaded by other peoples: Italy by the Lombards in the late sixth century and Africa by the Arabs in the seventh.

There is a risk, when looking at these peoples from the perspective of the Empire (or of sources written within the Empire), of misinterpreting their ambitions. In particular, the entire rationale for their activities can be reduced to rivalry with Rome; but their interactions with the Empire were driven not simply by hostile or covetous intentions towards Roman territory but also by internal concerns. Germanic societies set considerable store by martial ability and raiding the empire could reflect efforts by Germanic leaders to establish themselves as warlords.¹⁷ Meanwhile, on the eastern frontier, the practice of transhumance by Arabs seeking pasturage could be interpreted as an attack.¹⁸ Similarly unforeseen problems, such as food shortages or droughts, facing peoples beyond other frontiers could provoke movements into the empire.¹⁹ More seriously, onslaughts from other peoples, such as the Hunnic attacks on the Goths in the mid-370s, precipitated large-scale movements.

Viewed from within the dynamics of non-Roman states have their own logic. The eastern frontier provides instructive examples. From Armenia in the north to Axum (Ethiopia) and Himyar (Yemen) in the south the borderlands between Rome and Persia were occupied by a series of polities that found themselves caught up in the conflicts between their neighbouring great powers. Such peoples were far from being mere pawns: they exploited their positions to further their own ambitions, regardless of the interests of their alleged Roman or Persian overlords. We are told, for example, that the Anastasian war of 502–6 'was the cause of enrichment for the Tayyaye [Arabs] of both sides, and they did as they pleased in both empires' (Ps.-Joshua Stylites 80). A similar independence of mind and action can be seen in Armenia. Following the murder of king Arsak (Arsaces) in 368, the Persian king Shapur II launched incursions into Armenia. Arsak's son, the prince Pap, was installed as king with Roman assistance. In turn, however, and partly driven it would seem by conflict with the Church in Armenia arising out of his dealings with the emperor Valens, Pap turned against his erstwhile imperial allies and sought a rapprochement with the Persians. Such independence angered the Romans and in 375, following a botched kidnapping

¹⁷ Elton (1996b) 46–7. ¹⁸ Hoyland (2001) 96–102.

¹⁹ Shortage of food: Priscus fr. 37; Procop. *Wars* 3.3.1. Drought: Isaac (1992) 242.

attempt, Valens ordered Pap's assassination.²⁰ In the end Armenia was carved up between Rome and Persia, but even after this various Armenian potentates pursued their own ambitions (e.g. Sebeos 67–8). At other times different barbarian peoples sought to maximize their effectiveness against the Romans by combining forces. Ammianus described the concurrent attacks of the Picts, Attacotti and Scots on Britain in 367/8 as a 'barbarian conspiracy' (27.8.1). Later, the Ostrogothic king Vitigis attempted to distract Justinian from attacking Italy by asking the Persian shah to invade the east (Procop. *Wars* 2.2); during his attack on Constantinople in 626 the Avar Chagan presented the Persian commander Shahvaraz, who was occupying Chalcedon, as his ally and assistant (*Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 626).

Sasanid Persia provides some instructive examples of these various interpretative problems. On the one hand, it would appear to epitomize the greater stability of the Rome's enemies in late antiquity: certainly no other state was able to mount such sustained opposition to the Empire. Yet the Sasanid shahs were faced, like Rome's European enemies, by their own problems that could compromise their ability to mount hostilities against the Empire. Although Sasanid Persia was to a large extent a sophisticated, centralized, bureaucratic state,²¹ the authority of the shahs was often undermined by conflict with their nobles. Several revolts are known to have occurred, not only on the fringes of the Sasanid realm among the rulers of frontier marches such as the Kushanshahs in the north-east, but also among rival claimants to the throne, such as when Khusro II found himself ejected by his nobles in 590.²² There are also different assessments of the nature of Persia's rivalry with Rome. Roman authors expressed concerns at Sasanid territorial aims, seeing them as bent on restoring the ancient Achaemenid empire destroyed by Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC.²³ Such fears may represent Roman misunderstanding of Sasanid territorial ambitions since the shahs were content to consolidate their territorial holdings in Mesopotamia and their influence over intermediate states such as Armenia.²⁴ Moreover it would be erroneous to assume that hostilities with Rome were the single most important driving force behind Sasanid foreign policy, since the frontier with Rome was but one of several to be watched. In

²⁰ Amm. Marc. 30. 1 omits reference to Pap's problems within his kingdom that led him to deal with Shapur. These are narrated, albeit from a hostile perspective, in Pawstos of Buzand (attrib.), *Epic Histories* 5.22–4, 29, 31–2; cf. Blockley (1992) 34–6.

²¹ Thus Howard-Johnston (1995b) 211–26; Rubin (2000) argues for weaker royal authority.

²² Bivar (1983a) 209–12; cf. p. 267 below for Khusro II.

²³ Dio Cass. 80.4.1; Herodian 6.2.2; Amm. Marc. 17.5.5–6. Cf. Seager (1997) 253–9 on Ammianus' distortion of Shapur II's foreign policy ambitions in 359.

²⁴ For Sasanid territorial ambitions, see Fowden (1993) 24–36; Rubin (2000) 638–44; contrast Wiesehöfer (1996) 165–9 for Sasanid kings' notions of their dominion. Nostalgia for the Achaemenid past is conspicuously absent from the Persian tradition on the rise of the Sasanids, but may be implied by the erection of inscriptions and reliefs by Sasanid monarchs alongside examples by their Achaemenid forebears at Naqsh-e Rostam near Persepolis; Hermann (2000).

particular the Caucasus and Khorasan mountains flanking the Caspian Sea witnessed numerous confrontations between the Sasanids and the nomads of the central Asian steppes; just as the Romans were faced by Hunnic invasions in the late fourth and the fifth centuries so too were the Sasanids.²⁵ Indeed the geographical horizons of Sasanid rulers could stretch further still: at the end of his reign, as a fugitive from the conquering Muslim armies, Yazdgerd III sought the help of the Chinese emperor.²⁶ Likewise the Sasanids had interests to the south-west in the Arabian peninsula: in the third and fourth centuries, Ardashir I and Shapur II campaigned along the Arabian shores of the Persian Gulf as far as Bahrain; by the end of the sixth century, Sasanid intervention in this region extended to the imposition of governors.²⁷

III. IDEOLOGY IN FOREIGN RELATIONS: ROMANS AND BARBARIANS

The substantial geopolitical transformations experienced by the Empire between Diocletian and the Arab conquest affected its perspectives both in terms of the ideological underpinnings that guided policy and the goals it sought to achieve through diplomacy. The Romans did not view the various peoples living across the Empire's frontiers as a uniform non-Roman mass: distinctions were made not only according to the varying dangers that different groups were perceived to present but also in terms of their significance as enemies worthy of Roman attention. This arose out of the framework within which the Romans sought to comprehend their enemies, with information gathered from a variety of sources interpreted within the classical ethnographic tradition. This entailed some conservatism in the names used to describe non-Roman peoples, so that 'Scythians' could be used to designate Goths, Huns, Avars or Turks who lived beyond the Danube.²⁸ More fundamentally the ancient ethnographic tradition stressed the inherent moral superiority of Greeks and Romans over their neighbours: Romans perceived their opponents in terms of how their lifestyle and environment compared with what was considered normative within the Empire. Such ethnographic prejudice can be seen in Ammianus' description of the Huns, whose bestial nature was connected with their harsh environment (Amm. Marc. 31.2.1–4). A key feature of such culturally embedded stereotypes was that the barbarians' lack of civilization made them inherently unstable, so

²⁵ Bivar (1983a) 211–14.

²⁶ Tabari 1.2683, 2688–9, 2690–2. Contacts with China were continued by the Arabs: Istanbuli (2001) 67.

²⁷ Tabari 1.820 (Ardashir), 838–9 (Shapur). For Sasanid interests in Arabia: Hoyland (2001) 27–30.

²⁸ At times, the nomenclature used by late writers descends (or ascends) to the level of the surreal, as when George Syncellus renders the Heruli as 'Ailouroi' (literally, 'the cats'): *Chron.* p. 467.

that they were believed to be fickle and treacherous in negotiations,²⁹ while their military tactics were devious, a form of banditry. In large measure this reflected the nature of barbarian attacks, which often took the form of swift, brief raids that sought no greater objective than the collection of portable booty.³⁰ Nevertheless such prejudices could have ramifications for Roman actions towards barbarians. Ammianus notoriously reports how a band of Saxons was ambushed and slaughtered by Roman troops *after* terms had been agreed; the historian acknowledges that the act was harsh but states that it was permissible given that the Saxons had behaved like bandits.³¹

Yet for all their apparently trenchant character, late Roman attitudes to foreigners were never simply a distinction between a Roman 'us' and a barbarian 'them'. The realities of good foreign relations demanded modification of Roman prejudices and an effort to understand the concerns of foreign allies. Thus, when Julian was ordered to send troops from Gaul to assist in Constantius II's war with Persia, he objected that this would threaten good relations with Germans from across the Rhine who had enlisted in the Roman army on the understanding that they would never be moved to a theatre of war distant from their homeland (Amm. Marc. 30.4.3–4). This presence – and later prominence – of foreigners in Roman armies demonstrates how culturally embedded prejudices could be overcome. Indeed as the western provinces were being taken over by Germanic peoples in the fifth century, the Roman military showed no reluctance to join forces with 'barbarian' armies when it was deemed expedient.³² Stereotypes of what constituted barbarian and Roman persisted through the fifth century and beyond, but the location of individuals and groups within this framework was subject to change.³³ The conquest of Roman territories by such peoples came to be accepted in practical terms as a *fait accompli* quite quickly; in certain quarters there remained a hankering after the imperial past, but others saw their new rulers as receptive to civilizing influences which they now helped to protect.³⁴ The reasons for such variations in attitudes were complex. Policies could change swiftly as well as gradually, and often for reasons not wholly related to attitudes to barbarians. The aggressive anti-Gothic postures adopted by the eastern and western courts in the first decade of the fifth century partly reflected reactions against recent pro-barbarian policies that were deemed to have failed, but they were also caused by the ascendancy of new factions in the imperial government.³⁵

Not all foreigners were regarded as being equally contemptible. In 362 Julian gave short shrift to threatened hostilities by the Goths: eager to launch

²⁹ Elton (1996b) 138–45; Hoyland (2001) 96–8. ³⁰ Elton (1996b) 48–54; Isaac (1992) 235–43.

³¹ Amm. Marc. 28.5.7; cf. Elton (1996b) 175 and n. 1.

³² Elton (1996b) 134–52; Heather (1992) 89–93. ³³ Heather (1999b) 242–54.

³⁴ See the various essays assembled in Drinkwater and Elton (1992).

³⁵ Cameron and Long (1993) 323–33; Elton (1996b) 142–3.

his campaign against Persia, he sneered that the Goths were more appropriate as the quarry of slave-traders than of the emperor (Amm. Marc. 22.7.8). Implicit in Julian's assertion was the superiority of the Persians among Rome's enemies, and this became a familiar *topos* in late antique international relations. The process reached its apogee in 590–2 when Maurice helped the fugitive Persian shah Khusro II reclaim his throne. By this point the Roman Empire and Sasanid Persia could be regarded as the world's 'two eyes', great powers ordained by Heaven to impose order on uncivilized barbarians.³⁶ The reasons for this different attitude to the Persians are never stated explicitly. In part it could reflect Roman acknowledgement of Persia's superior power and resources when compared with those of the Empire's other enemies. No other foreign polity was so long lived in this period; none was able to mount such repeatedly successful invasions of the Empire; and nowhere was diplomatic activity so intense as across the Romano-Persian frontier.³⁷ Indeed diplomatic exchanges between Rome and Persia alluded to the superiority of the Persians over other barbarians.³⁸ Certainly Romano-Persian relations in late antiquity could aspire to high goals, such as cooperative defensive measures to control the passes through the Caucasus mountains.³⁹ The phenomenon is also reflected in the famous story that the dying eastern emperor Arcadius entrusted the care of his young son and successor Theodosius II to the Sasanid Yazdgerd I (Procop. *Wars* 1.2.7–10; Agathias 4.26.3–7). The story is suspect, being unreported by any source before the second half of the sixth century; even so, it suggests a high regard for the Persians.⁴⁰

Yet admiration for Persia was not unqualified and could be forgotten at times of conflict. Around the time of Galerius' Persian campaigns the tetrarchs claimed that the Manichaeans were seeking to corrupt Romans 'with the accursed customs and perverse laws of the Persians'.⁴¹ Negative stereotypes could reappear even after periods of amity. Romano-Persian relations suddenly deteriorated when Khusro I was succeeded by his son Hormizd IV in 579. In the view of Menander Protector the fault lay entirely with the Persian king himself, whom he characterized as a wicked and arrogant barbarian (Men. Prot. fr. 23.9). A more extreme example is provided by Khusro II who developed from a potential Christian convert in 590/1 to the 'cursed' and 'God-abhorred' enemy of the 620s.⁴²

³⁶ Theophyl. Sim. 4.11.2–3; cf. Men. Prot. fr. 2; see p. 267 below.

³⁷ Lee (1993b) 103–4 (Roman acknowledgement of Persian sophistication), 143–4 (frequency of conflict), 169–70 (level of Romano-Persian diplomatic contact).

³⁸ Men. Prot. fr. 9.1: the Roman envoy Comentiolus invited Khusro I to consider the barbarous and duplicitous nature of the Saracens, implicitly contrasting their lack of civilization with Persian sophistication.

³⁹ See below p. 249. ⁴⁰ Greatrex and Bardill (1996) 171–80; cf. Blockley (1992) 51–2.

⁴¹ *Collatio legum Romanarum et Mosaicarum (FIRA)* 15.3.

⁴² Excoriation: *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 628. For his pious dealings in 590–2, see p. 267 below.

However much images of the Empire's barbarian neighbours underwent subtle change in the period between Diocletian and Heraclius, the Romans seem never to have lost sight of their own perceived cultural superiority. The Empire remained a paradigm of calm order amid the wild disorganization of the barbarian world: at the end of the fourth century Pacatus extolled Theodosius I for imposing orderly behaviour on the Goths, Huns and Alans in his armies; two centuries later, Justin II reminded the Avar envoy Targites that it had been Rome's destiny, from the beginning of time, to teach the earth's nations civilization.⁴³ Through such organizational complexity the Romans believed they had attained their imperial supremacy; and knowledge of it was enough to strike terror into the hearts of their enemies.⁴⁴ Yet the means by which the Empire was able to translate this ideological assumption into foreign policy were transformed as imperial territories were lost and fiscal and manpower resources contracted.

IV. FOREIGN POLICY AIMS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: FROM WAR TO DIPLOMACY

During the late Republic and the Principate Rome asserted its supremacy and pretence to universal dominion through acts of war, imperial expansion and the construction of a network of client kingdoms along its frontiers. In late antiquity the Empire retained that ideal of its own supremacy. There are striking parallels between the early and later Empires in this regard: just as Augustus boasted that he had received embassies from far beyond the Roman world, including India, so too both Justinian and Heraclius (the latter specifically on account of his victory over Persia) received embassies and gifts from Indian kings.⁴⁵ The image of emperors as successful military leaders endured into late antiquity: in inscriptions, they were accorded *cognomina* commemorating the peoples they had vanquished; on coins and in sculpture they were often depicted in military dress, triumphing over barbarian foes.⁴⁶ Nor was there an immediate end to acts of aggression: between Diocletian's accession and the death of Theodosius I numerous campaigns were waged across the frontiers, and Symmachus, for example, enthused that Valentinian I's activities in barbarian lands effectively created new provinces (*Or.* 2.31). After the fourth century, however, such campaigns became much less frequent, although they could be on a grand scale, such as Justinian's western reconquest and Heraclius' Persian War. But none of these campaigns seems to have been engaged to bring about new conquests:

⁴³ Pacatus, *Pan. Lat.* 2(12)32.3–4; Justin II: *Men. Prot. fr.* 12.6. Cf. Theophyl. *Sim.* 4.11.2–3.

⁴⁴ Veg. *Mil.* 1.1 (importance of military efficiency); Zos. 2.12 (Valentinian I's military organization terrifies Germans).

⁴⁵ Malalas 18.106 Thurn = 484.9–10 Dindorf; Theophanes, *Chron.* 335.10–12 (AM 6123).

⁴⁶ McCormick (1986) 11–79.

even Justinian's wars were fought avowedly to reassert Roman power over territories that had been lost (*Nov.* 30.11.2). The aims of warfare, and of foreign relations generally, seem to have been directed at securing the image of imperial supremacy and reasserting a status quo that the Romans felt had been damaged by foreign aggression. The pressure that we have seen being exerted on imperial resources ultimately forced the Empire to adopt new strategies in securing its strategic aims, and among these was a greater reliance on diplomatic activity as an adjunct, substitute or delaying tactic for war.

It is generally asserted that diplomacy became a dominant element in Roman foreign relations in the fifth century, particularly in the reign of Theodosius II.⁴⁷ If fragments in John of Antioch and the *Suda* are rightly ascribed to his lost history, then Priscus of Panium both acknowledged the shift in policy and judged the emperor harshly as unwarlike and cowardly, preferring to buy peace rather than fight for it.⁴⁸ Priscus wrote after Theodosius' death but contemporary authors such as the Church historians Socrates and Sozomen were more favourable to the emperor's bloodless 'successes'. After the mid-fifth century the Empire developed an elaborate diplomatic apparatus with cogent norms; but their origins were apparent already in the fourth century, when the emperors themselves often led armies in the field and presided directly over the use of diplomacy as an adjunct to war. Valentinian I, for example, campaigned extensively along the Rhine and later the Danube, even crossing into barbarian territory. Such actions corresponded neatly with the practice of war under the Principate as a means to reinforce imperial supremacy: Valentinian took the appropriate *cognomina* but never aimed at conquering new territory so much as emphasizing Roman power, consolidating client networks and guaranteeing imperial security.⁴⁹ Moreover, he did not succeed solely through active campaigning, but restored defences along and across the Rhine and Danube and enhanced security by a variety of diplomatic initiatives: thus he attempted to undermine the power of the Alamanni by persuading the Burgundians to attack them; he secured the assassination of one of their kings and sought to kidnap another, Macrianus; and when the attempt on Macrianus failed, he tried to outflank him by supporting a rival (*Amm. Marc.* 27.10.3–4, 28.5.8–15, 29.4.2, 7). These various efforts culminated in a treaty with Macrianus in 374. Valentinian approached the Rhine accompanied by an impressive host of his troops. The ideal of these encounters had been articulated in Symmachus' panegyric of 370, in which the Burgundians, terrified by the presence of the emperor and his army, had submitted. The Geneva

⁴⁷ Blockley (1998) 433–6. ⁴⁸ Priscus fr. 3.1–2 = John of Antioch fr. 194 and *Suda* Θ145.

⁴⁹ Strategic superiority is emphasized throughout Symmachus' panegyrics of 369–70 (*Or.* 1–2). Security is implied by such coin legends as *Restitutor reipublicae* and *Securitas reipublicae*.

missorium of Valentinian reiterated the point: the emperor, surrounded by his troops and presented with the attributes of victory, stood triumphant over discarded barbarian arms. In 374, however, Valentinian did not possess the advantage, even though ultimately he secured the treaty he wanted. He had been compelled to seek peace by the outbreak of trouble on the Danube frontier; and Macrianus, significantly, approached the negotiations haughtily and refused to cross the Rhine to offer submission.⁵⁰ This was less important than the basis upon which the encounter was predicated. The meeting was intended to encapsulate an ideal, that barbarians could be made to submit through the awe-inspiring presence of Roman might, and that such diplomacy underscored imperial hegemony.⁵¹

After the fourth century emperors rarely went into battle themselves, but through the ceremonial character of diplomatic encounters they still sought to present an overpowering image of imperial might.⁵² Yet for all the rhetoric of superiority it was apparent that diplomacy was often used in place of warfare precisely because the Empire had no alternative, as when Valentinian was confronted by twin threats in 374. As pressure on imperial resources increased thereafter, a major function of diplomacy was to prevent the Empire from becoming embroiled simultaneously in costly wars on multiple fronts. In 578–9 embassies from Rome asked Tiberius II to assist the beleaguered Italians against the Lombards; but the emperor, already engaged in other wars, sought instead to use diplomacy either to win Lombard loyalty or to persuade the Franks to fight against them (Men. Prot. fr. 22, 24). Even in these constrained times some emperors preferred to fight if they could and only used diplomacy to resolve the messy aftermath of defeat. Justin II refused to reach terms with the Avars until they defeated his forces, at which point he had little option but to negotiate (Men. Prot. fr. 15.1).

The Romans appreciated that diplomacy could secure strategic advantage by exploiting enemy weaknesses and divisions. The Sasanid shahs were often distracted by conflicts on Persia's other frontiers so that the Romans could try to persuade them to accept terms.⁵³ Rivalries between various barbarian peoples could be exploited or encouraged. Justinian sought to neutralize the Kotrigur Huns north of the Black Sea by persuading the neighbouring Utigurs to attack them (Men. Prot. fr. 2). Later, when the Persians antagonized the Turks, Justin II exploited the situation and allied them instead with the Roman Empire (Men. Prot. fr. 10.1). These examples

⁵⁰ Amm. Marc. 30.3. Burgundians: Symmachus *Or.* 2.13. *Missorium*: Delbrueck (1933) 179–82 and pl. 79. In 375 a less successful encounter with the Quadi ended in Valentinian's death after a fit of apoplexy occasioned by the envoys' obduracy: Amm. Marc. 30.6.1–3.

⁵¹ E.g. Amm. Marc. 17.13.3, 31.12.9; Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.9; cf. Theophyl. Sim. 5.3.3 for a later example.

⁵² See pp. 255, 258–9 below.

⁵³ Amm. Marc. 16.9.2–4 for the unsuccessful initiative by Musonianus in 358; Lee (1993b) 106–42.

show how strategic advantage could be secured by outflanking enemies on their other frontiers, a concern that explains both Roman and Persian activity in southern Arabia and Axum from the fourth century until the rise of Islam. The Empire was also prepared to use underhand tactics like murder and kidnapping (as Valentinian did against the Alamanni) to maintain strategic superiority.⁵⁴ Yet diplomatic manoeuvres brought responsibilities and had their limits. Both Rome and Persia used Arab allies – by the sixth century, the Ghassanids and Lakhmids respectively – to secure the desert frontier zone, but it was an avowed ideal, as set down in the treaty of 562, that neither Rome nor Persia would encourage their Arab allies to attack the other empire (Procop. *Wars* 2.1.1–4; Men. Prot. fr. 6.1). At the northern end of the Romano-Persian frontier Armenia was frequently the focus of diplomatic and military interventions. In the fourth century the Romans had used (or sought to use) Armenia as a client state, with kings appointed by and beholden to Roman emperors. This made Armenia a focus of Rome's conflicts with the Sasanids, and even after the division of the kingdom between Rome and Persia Roman diplomatic manoeuvring in Persian Armenia continued, often at the urging of Armenian nobles and in ostensible defence of the region's Christians.⁵⁵ Eventually this conflict frustrated both parties and Maurice and Khusro II could agree that the Armenians were 'a perverse and disobedient race' who should be split up and relocated (Sebeos 15).

A variation on this type of initiative occurred when the Romans cooperated with foreign peoples on matters of mutual interest. The settlement of the Goths in Gaul in 418 required them to provide military forces to assist the Romans in maintaining their crumbling authority in the west. In 489 Zeno delegated to Theoderic the Ostrogoth the responsibility for reintegrating Italy into the empire; but this served Zeno's interests too in that it enabled him to rid himself of the problems posed by the Ostrogoths in the Balkans.⁵⁶ Again Romano-Persian relations provide some of the most striking examples of the phenomenon, notably Maurice's support for the fugitive Khusro II in 590–2. In other circumstances the Romans and Persians debated about how to manage joint defence of the Caspian Gates in the Caucasus against the Sabir Huns, although the precise arrangements for this collaboration often provoked disagreement; moreover, the Romans were concerned about Persian ambitions in the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian because of the extent to which it encroached on the Roman client kingdom of Caucasian Lazica.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ On such duplicity, see Whitby (2008). ⁵⁵ Thomson (2000) 668–75; cf. p. 242 above.

⁵⁶ Heather (1991) 221–4, 295–308.

⁵⁷ Caspian Gates: Priscus fr. 47; Ps.-Joshua Stylites 9–10; Procop. *Wars* 2.10.21–4; with Blockley (1992) 61, 89–91, 93. Lazica: Procop. *Wars* 2.15.27, 2.28.23, 8.7.12; Agathias 2.18.7; with Lee (1993b) 23–4, 116–17.

In Roman eyes most such diplomatic arrangements served to underpin imperial supremacy. Relationships with clients or allies were expressed in hegemonic terms: the kings of Lazica received their royal insignia directly from the Roman emperor; recalcitrant kings could be removed, as when Valens had the Armenian Pap assassinated or Tiberius II and Maurice exiled the Ghassanid phylarchs al-Mundhir and al-Nu'man.⁵⁸ Maurice's support of Khusro established a close relationship between the Persian shah that could be represented in terms of Roman hegemony: in return for imperial help Khusro relinquished control over the Persian Armenia and Iberia as well as the frontier fortresses of Dara and Martyropolis.⁵⁹ Indeed, throughout its foreign relations, and regardless of the straightened circumstances in which it found itself, the Empire sought to maintain an image of its own superiority and ability to dictate terms. Disadvantageous arrangements were represented in positive terms. Thus Jovian's treaty with the Persians in 363, though denounced by Ammianus as shameful, did not prevent the emperor from presenting himself to his new subjects as victorious and triumphant.⁶⁰ Not long afterwards Themistius put a positive gloss on Valens' less than categorical victory over the Goths by extolling the emperor's generosity to his enemies.⁶¹ Payments of tribute by the Romans could be presented as acts of imperial magnanimity; but requests that the Romans should pay tribute often foundered precisely because paying tribute made the Empire look subservient.⁶² That was not the Roman way; instead, it was the barbarians who should beg for terms.

V. THE FORMATION OF FOREIGN POLICY: SPIES, MERCHANTS AND FRONTIERS

To assert supremacy through diplomacy is one thing; to be well enough informed to be able to outflank an enemy through negotiations is another. In some cases the Romans had sufficient knowledge of the problems facing their enemies to be able to apply diplomatic pressure to them, though those same enemies were often well informed about the Empire's difficulties. Equally, bad or contradictory information could prove costly: Musonianus' attempt to make peace with Shapur backfired because his information about Persian commitments in the east was outdated (Amm. Marc. 16.9.2–4). The gathering of intelligence in late antiquity saw much interpenetration between formal and informal networks; boundaries were comparatively fluid and did not act as impenetrable barriers to movement

⁵⁸ Lazica: Procop. *Wars* 2.15.2; Pap: n. 20 above; Ghassanids: Shahid (1995) 455–622.

⁵⁹ Whitby (1988) 297–300.

⁶⁰ Them. *Or.* 5.66a–c; cf. *CIL* v 8037, a milestone from northern Italy describing Jovian as *victor ac triumphator semper Augustus*.

⁶¹ Heather and Matthews (1991) ch. 2. ⁶² See pp. 259–60 below.

of people and information. This is not to say that the Romans (or some Romans) had no concept of a territorial distinction between the Empire and its neighbours: certainly, an anonymous fourth-century treatise argued that defence of the *limites imperii* should be the state's primary concern and suggested various administrative reforms and ingenious inventions to render it more efficient.⁶³ It is clear that traffic travelled in both directions across the frontiers. Trade was a major reason: peoples neighbouring the Empire sought goods produced within it, while the Romans imported products from beyond their frontiers, such as the luxurious spices and silks acquired from the caravan routes that traversed the Near East. Barbarian recruits in the late Roman army also reflect cross-frontier contact. Movement could occur for reasons unconnected with the economic and military life of the Empire. The frontier between Rome and Persia cut through a zone whose cultural interconnections came to be more pronounced with the advent of Christianity. This encouraged movement for various reasons. Armenian and Persian pilgrims travelled to the Holy Land and Egypt, while pious Christians on both sides of the frontier sought out martyr shrines and ascetics in Syria and Mesopotamia.⁶⁴ Christian communities within Persia communicated with their brethren in the Roman empire for other reasons too, through attendance at theological schools in Edessa and Nisibis or for consultation about matters of ecclesiastical administration.⁶⁵ Similar contacts also existed between Jewish communities in Palestine and Persia.⁶⁶ In these circumstances the best the Roman authorities could do was to seek to control movement, a factor that emerges in treaties.⁶⁷ Otherwise freedom of movement seems to have been unchallenged, although the outbreak of war could cause disruption in such cross-border contacts.⁶⁸

Such traffic could carry with it information useful to strategic initiatives.⁶⁹ In 533 the Visigothic king Theudis used intelligence garnered from merchants about the fall of Carthage to Belisarius to inform his response to a Vandal embassy asking for his help (Procop. *Wars* 2.2). Justin II learned of Persian military manoeuvres against Nisibis in 573 through the agency of bishops.⁷⁰ Not all such information was accurate: in 532 a false report that Justinian had rejected Persian requests in negotiations prompted Khusro I to renew his offensive against the Empire; and in 559/60 erroneous rumours that the Persians were advancing on Amida provoked mass hysteria

⁶³ *De rebus bellicis* 20 for defence, and *passim* for suggested innovations.

⁶⁴ Lee (1993b) 56–7; Key Fowden (1999) 94–100, 123–9.

⁶⁵ Lee (1993b) 58–60. Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 3.7.1, 4.43.3 claimed that Persian bishops attended the councils of Nicaea (325) and Jerusalem (335), but his account deliberately constructs these councils as universal and thus is not above suspicion: Cameron and Hall (1999) 263, 331.

⁶⁶ Lee (1993b) 60–1.

⁶⁷ See below pp. 261–2.

⁶⁸ Lee (1993b) 54–5.

⁶⁹ Lee (1993b) 161–5.

⁷⁰ Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.9; Lee (1993b).

throughout the region.⁷¹ Nevertheless the potential for information to pass in such ways was taken seriously. A law of 408/9 limited the markets on the eastern frontier at which Roman merchants traded lest the Persian king should somehow learn secret information, while those travelling across a frontier were scrutinized by border guards.⁷² Similar concerns are evident among the Empire's enemies. Sasanid kings were warned that their Christian subjects might betray them, and the ageing Ostrogothic king Theoderic suspected Italians in contact with Constantinople of treachery.⁷³

In addition to using these informal sources of information it is clear that the Romans took steps to acquire strategic intelligence for themselves. Procopius reports that both the Romans and Persians were accustomed to use spies funded by the state and contemporary manuals laid down detailed requirements for the selection of spies and the arrangements of their missions;⁷⁴ yet our knowledge of the technical arrangements for spying is thin. The sources use a wide variety of terms (e.g. *arcani*, *exploratores*, *kataskopoi*, *speculatores*) for spies; they also suggest a range of activities from scouting while on campaign to espionage deep within enemy territory.⁷⁵ Even the *Notitia Dignitatum*, with its extensive lists of troop deployments, helps little in understanding how spies operated in connection with the rest of the army. It lists *exploratores* among the troops attached to a few, but only a few, commanders of frontier troops.⁷⁶ In some cases it is clear that individuals who would not normally be designated as *exploratores* were used to gather intelligence. Ammianus, a *protector domesticus*, was sent on a mission to Persian Corduene, and Belisarius dispatched his secretary Procopius to Sicily to seek information about the Vandal navy.⁷⁷ Clearly espionage worked in conjunction with other means of collecting information. Embassies to foreign courts could provide useful information. Agathias' account of the Sasanid kings, for example, was based on information gathered for him in the Persian royal archives by Sergius, an interpreter who travelled to the Persian court (5.30). In this context, it was recognized that the participants in embassies could be gathering covert intelligence, and a sixth-century writer on strategy stated categorically that embassies needed to be watched and their movements controlled to ensure that they did not discover sensitive military information.⁷⁸ Equally the situation could be exploited: Khusro I brought the ambassador Theodorus with him on campaign and used every opportunity to demonstrate the capacity and size of his forces (Men. Prot. fr. 18.6).

⁷¹ Procop. *Wars* 1.22.9–10; Ps.-Dionysius, *Chron.* pp. 115–16.

⁷² Markets: *Cod. Iust.* 4.63.4. Scrutiny of travellers: Jer. *Vit. Malch.* 10; August. *Ep.* 46–7.

⁷³ Persian Christians: below pp. 265–6. Italy: *Anon. Val.* 85–93.

⁷⁴ Procop. *Wars* 1.21.11; Maurice, *Strat.* 2.11, 7.3, 9.5; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 42.

⁷⁵ Lee (1993b) 170–2. ⁷⁶ Austin and Rankov (1995) 237–9.

⁷⁷ Amm. Marc. 18.6.20–2; Procop. *Wars* 3.14.1–5; and see generally Lee (1993b) 170–82.

⁷⁸ Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 43; Lee (1986).

The systems for gathering and acting upon intelligence operated under certain limitations. There was a risk that defectors might betray strategic intelligence, and spies operating in enemy territory were acknowledged as potential deserters so that loyalty was a key factor in their selection (Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri Strat.* 42; cf. Procop. *Wars* 1.21.12). At a more mundane level there were problems about the speed with which information could reach those responsible for taking decisions. Socrates claims that Theodosius II's courier Palladius could reach the Persian frontier from Constantinople in only three days. Even if true this must have been exceptional, and in general information on the time taken by envoys to reach their destinations suggests that movement could be slow and that rapid communication of intelligence was unusual (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.19). A more piecemeal acquisition of intelligence was perhaps normal. Ammianus reports that Constantius II heard of Shapur II's preparations for war in 359 first by rumour and then through reliable reports, but the flow of information did not stop there. Soon afterwards, Antoninus, a *protector* of the *dux Mesopotamiae* defected to the Persians bringing with him details of Roman troop dispositions, and later Ammianus went on his mission to Corduene to observe the Persian preparations.⁷⁹ This sequence of events suggests that the gathering of intelligence was a haphazard combination of system and opportunism, with rumours, espionage, reports and betrayals overlapping.

VI. THE PRACTICE OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

The processes by which information gathered about foreign peoples was translated into action depended on a variety of factors. In the absence of anything like a modern government's department of foreign affairs, the late Empire had to rely on a rather more fluid decision-making process that meant the implementation of foreign policy was rarely consistent. Even so it is possible to see some specific developments in the conduct of foreign relations when looking at the ways in which decisions were made, the means by which diplomatic exchanges were conducted and the peace settlements that resulted from them.

I. Personnel

Throughout late antiquity the emperor maintained a central role in the formation of policy, although the circumstances in which he pursued this function changed. While emperors spent much of their time campaigning with their armies they were well placed to take appropriate action based on

⁷⁹ Amm. Marc. 18.4.2; 18.5–6; see Matthews (1989a) for problems caused by the delays in receiving this information.

information received from across adjacent frontiers, as the case of Valentinian I demonstrates.⁸⁰ In these circumstances local commanders were reluctant to engage in diplomatic activity in the emperor's absence: for example, commanders along the lower Danube in 376 refused to grant the Goths permission to migrate into the empire until they received orders from the emperor Valens (Eunap. fr. 42). This pointed to a weakness in the system: an emperor faced difficulties in making decisions about a troubled frontier from which he was absent, as Valentinian I found when he first received reports of the invasion of Pannonia by the Sarmatians and Quadi. After 395 the emperors' personal role in conducting foreign policy underwent a significant change as they came to reside more or less permanently in the imperial capital, which shifted the location of much diplomatic activity from the frontier to the palace. This did not mean that emperors became irrelevant to the decision-making process, particularly if they favoured an aggressive foreign policy. Justin II had a grand conception of Roman dignity and preferred fighting to concessions: for this reason he refused to continue the payments that Justinian latterly had made to the Saracens (Men. Prot. fr. 15.1, 9.1). Emperors could take stern measures against governors and commanders whose actions displeased them. Bonus, Justin II's general at Sirmium, refused to make terms with the Avars, stating that it was not within his power to do so without the emperor's permission (Men. Prot. fr. 12.5).⁸¹ There was no guarantee, of course, that emperors would necessarily make the right decisions on the basis of the information they received. In 573 Justin II preferred rumours of the death of Khusro I over reports that the Persians were massing their forces for a counter-offensive against the Roman assault on Nisibis. He also rejected advice about negotiations with the Avars from Tiberius, chief commander in the Balkans, who was well placed to observe what the Avar Khagan realistically could be expected to offer (Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.9; Men. Prot. fr. 15.1).

Emperors did not make decisions about international relations on their own, but relied heavily on advice given to them by groups of advisors. In late antiquity this role was performed by members of the *sacrum consistorium* (sacred consistory), the inner circle of the imperial court. Its precise definition was subject to change. In the fourth century, with emperors actively involved in campaigns along the frontiers, the *consistorium* included, besides the chief palatine officials, members of the military high command, as well as the emperor's friends and favourites. The influence of these various individuals is apparent in the sources, for instance when Ammianus attributed Valens' decision to admit the Goths to the empire to 'experienced flatterers'

⁸⁰ See p. 247 above.

⁸¹ Compare Heraclius' efforts to reassert his authority after the Yarmuk (636) by dismissing governors who agreed terms with Muslim armies, contrary to imperial policy: Theophanes, *Chron.* 340.7–10 (AM 6128) (cf. 338.18–21 (AM 6126)); Kaegi (1992) 159–63.

(Amm. Marc. 31.4.4). After the move from a mobile court on the frontier to a static one in the capital, the military, in the shape of the *magistri militum praesentales*, remained influential, particularly in the fifth century, when many took an active role in the formation of foreign policy. Stilicho dominated Honorius' dealings with Alaric; later Aëtius oversaw western negotiations with Attila.⁸² Although distant from the frontiers, the palace was not cut off from them. Theodosius II arranged that reports about the disposition of frontier troops should be sent to the *consistorium* every January, which was perhaps useful in making foreign policy decisions.⁸³ Nevertheless powerful civilian courtiers, regardless of their area of competence, became increasingly influential. For instance Theodosius II's eunuch chamberlain Chrysaphius conducted negotiations with the Hunnic envoy Edeco (Priscus fr. 11.1). Imperial women too could drive policy. Theodosius II's renewed hostilities with Persia were encouraged by his sister Pulcheria, and during Justin II's madness the empress Sophia exercised his authority, including the conduct of foreign relations and the reception of envoys.⁸⁴

Since access to the emperor was central to the conduct of diplomacy, those officials who managed the emperor's day-to-day business exerted great influence. The most important was the *magister officiorum*. His role as overseer of ceremonial procedures at court, particularly access to the emperor, and his command over channels of communications, such as the imperial post and the *agentes in rebus*, meant he controlled many of the processes directly related to information gathering and the conduct of diplomacy.⁸⁵ This by no means implies that the *magister officiorum* was in any way analogous to a modern minister of foreign affairs. To be sure, some, such as Peter the Patrician, had previously acted as ambassadors and would have brought to their new position an expertise in foreign relations.⁸⁶ On occasion the *magister officiorum* could be sent to the frontier to oversee negotiations, as was Helion in 422, while Celer in 506 and Hermogenes 529–30 not only negotiated but participated in campaigns as well.⁸⁷ But in general the importance of the *magister* resided in his position at court, not any degree of specialization in diplomacy. All told, there was no fixed group of advisors that could provide cogency or continuity that might be expected of a modern government department.⁸⁸ Nor could the quality of advice be guaranteed.

A similar picture emerges from any study of ambassadors who conducted most of the minutiae of Roman international relations. There was

⁸² O'Flynn (1983).

⁸³ *Nov. Theod.* 24.5; cf. Elton (1996b) 243 highlighting its significance for strategic intelligence.

⁸⁴ Pulcheria: Holum (1977); Sophia: Men. Prot. fr. 18.1.

⁸⁵ Blockley (1992) 155–8; Lee (1993b) 41–4. ⁸⁶ *PLRE* III 994–8, Petrus 6.

⁸⁷ *PLRE* II 275–7, Celer 2; 533, Helion 1; *PLRE* III 590–3, Hermogenes 1.

⁸⁸ Barnish, Lee and Whitby (2000).

no corps of career diplomats so envoys were specially chosen for each mission. Roman emperors were particularly concerned that envoys should have a high level of cultural attainment. Theodosius II's envoys to the Huns, for example, included Epigenes who had also been involved in the compilation of the Theodosian Code.⁸⁹ Eunapius explains why Romans thought cultured ambassadors were useful: when the philosopher Eustathius went on an embassy to Shapur II his wisdom so beguiled the shah as to make him contemplate renouncing his throne (Eunap. VS 466). The honour and rank of envoys was important too. Hence Valens scorned the low-born individuals sent to negotiate with him by the Goths on the eve of the battle of Adrianople (Amm. Marc. 31.12.12–13). Later, when Tiberius II sent the physician Zacharias and the imperial bodyguard Theodorus to Persia, he granted them enhanced status, as ex-prefect and general respectively (Men. Prot. fr. 23.8). The status of envoys seems to have become an established aspect of diplomatic protocol and was also recognized by foreign kings: Attila, for example, demanded that 'ambassadors come to him and not just ordinary men but the highest ranking of the consulars' (Priscus fr. 11.1). Personal connections of friendship were also important. It is possible, for example, that when Ammianus was sent to Corduene to make contact with the Persian satrap Jovinianus, he was chosen because they had known each other in the past.⁹⁰ Certainly some individuals are known to have served as envoys on several occasions. This trend grew more pronounced between the fourth and sixth centuries.⁹¹ Anatolius served as Theodosius II's envoy to Attila on three occasions; a bond of trust apparently developed between them since Anatolius was one of the envoys whom Attila later demanded Theodosius send to him.⁹² A striking example is provided by one of Justinian's envoys to the Persian court, Rufinus, who 'was well known there as one who had often been sent as ambassador to Kavād and was his friend, and had bestowed many gifts on the leading men of his kingdom, and the queen, Khusro's mother, was well-disposed to him, because he had advised Kavād to make her son king'. Furthermore, Rufinus' father Silvanus and his son John also served as ambassadors to Persia.⁹³ Such examples suggest that, even if there was never a coherent system in place, there were nevertheless basic principles that determined the composition of embassies.

In addition to policy decisions made at the level of the court, many different layers of personnel were involved in the diplomatic process. Dealing with the Empire's polyglot enemies required a host of interpreters, who are mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum* and some of whom can be glimpsed in accounts of diplomatic contact.⁹⁴ Negotiations also generated considerable

⁸⁹ PLRE II 396, Epigenes. ⁹⁰ Matthews (1989a) 44. ⁹¹ Lee (1993b) 46–7.

⁹² PLRE II 84–6, Anatolius 10; Priscus fr. 13.1.

⁹³ Zach. Hist. eccl. 9.7; cf. PLRE II 954–7, Rufinus 13; 1011–12, Silvanus 7; PLRE III 625–6, Ioannes 7.

⁹⁴ Not. Dign. occ. 9.46 and or. 11.52.

documentation as letters were exchanged and treaties were drafted, copied, translated and archived. This presupposes a number of secretaries, but they rarely make their appearance in the sources, apart from individuals such as Constantius, whom Aëtius sent to Attila and Bleda (Priscus fr. 11.2), or Armonius, who drafted Anastasius' treaty with the Persians (Marc. Com. *Chron.* s.a. 504). Military personnel were involved in the arrangements of negotiations or in the facilitating of envoys' travel. *Duces* and *magistri* on the frontiers, as well as Persian satraps, often engaged in negotiations, even though they knew the final say in such matters lay with their rulers. At times when we see them making decisions, it emerges that they, like the emperor, did not act alone, but relied on the counsel of soldiers and civilians, including local bishops.⁹⁵ Envoys could get embroiled in other activities: the *magister officiorum* Celer, in the course of resolving the Anastasian war, arranged for the financial relief of cities in Mesopotamia (Ps.-Joshua Stylites 99–100), while John, on a mission from Justin II to Persia, also oversaw the restoration of the water supply at Dara (Men. Prot. fr. 9.1).

2. *Embassies*

Like the selection of envoys, the conduct of embassies was subject to elaboration in late antiquity, reaching a highly developed form in the sixth century. By this point diplomatic exchanges occurred with some regularity: in addition to traffic in the lead up to war or during negotiations for peace, the Romans dispatched embassies to their neighbours to announce an emperor's succession, a practice also observed by Persian and western barbarian kings.⁹⁶ Similarly embassies were sent to reaffirm treaties or to follow up earlier negotiations (Men. Prot. fr. 19.1, 20.1). This led to a considerable volume of diplomatic traffic in which embassies could overlap: when Priscus reached Attila's camp he found there an embassy sent from the western Empire (fr. 11.2). Personnel within an embassy could also be detached from it to perform some special task, such as going ahead to prepare for the arrival of the rest of the delegation (Men. Prot. fr. 10.4).

The powers of ambassadors seem to have varied, particularly in terms of the extent to which they were at liberty to negotiate terms or whether everything they agreed was provisional until ratified by the emperor. Menander Protector, for example, distinguishes between 'major' and 'minor' embassies to the Persians: empress Sophia dispatched Zacharias to make a truce and announce that Constantinople 'would send a major embassy with full authority to discuss everything and end the war'. Minor embassies were used primarily to convey messages, whereas greater embassies had fuller

⁹⁵ Cf. Men. Prot. fr. 26.1: Persian governors at a meeting. ⁹⁶ Chrysos (1992) 31–3.

powers to negotiate settlements without reference to the emperor.⁹⁷ On the other hand, during negotiations in 531/2 talks had to be suspended for seventy days while Rufinus returned to Constantinople to consult Justinian about a Persian request for the cession of fortresses in Armenia (Procop. *Wars* 1.22.6–8). In general, it seems that ratification by the emperor was required for any treaty arrangement (e.g. Men. Prot. fr. 18.3).

It was expected that diplomacy should be conducted according to law and custom and that embassies should enjoy certain privileges. The work *Peri strategikes* summarizes the view, stating that envoys sent to the Romans ‘should be received honourably and generously, since everyone holds them in esteem’ (Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri Strat.* 43). Conversely, ambassadors should not behave arrogantly (Men. Prot. fr. 25.2). The Romans assumed that their embassies would be well treated on their arrival at a foreign court: Priscus’ famous description of the hospitality offered by Attila provides an extravagant example of how an embassy should be received (Priscus fr. 11.2). Safe passage should also be guaranteed, which usually required that ambassadors and their associates were unarmed.⁹⁸ The maltreatment of envoys was considered wrong: according to Menander Protector it contravened universally observed laws about how ambassadors should be received, and lapses from this code of conduct were associated with the lawlessness of barbarians.⁹⁹ This explains the anxiety of Kavadh in 505/6, when he sent the body of the *dux Mesopotamiae* Olympius back to the Empire in a coffin as proof that the envoy had died of natural causes (Ps.-Joshua Stylites 80). The inviolability of envoys was underpinned by notions that diplomatic activity was sacred (Men. Prot. frs. 6.1, 19.1), as were the treaties that resulted.¹⁰⁰

Embassies sent to the Romans culminated with their reception by the emperor or his representatives. This had reached a degree of considerable sophistication by the sixth century, by which stage the Byzantine court was approaching the dizzying ceremonial spectacle recorded by Constantine Porphyrogenitus and Liutprand of Cremona. The envoys would approach the emperor in his palace, where they would find him surrounded by his courtiers and bodyguards. The purpose of such display is reiterated in numerous accounts of the reception of envoys, particularly those provided by encomiasts reiterating imperial ideals. Paul the Silentiary in his description of Justinian’s masterpiece Hagia Sophia recounts that a group of Africans visiting Constantinople was so overwhelmed by the majesty

⁹⁷ Men. Prot. frs. 18.2, 18.6, 20.1, 23.8; see Blockley (1992) 152–3 for the possible origins of this practice.

⁹⁸ Ps.-Joshua Stylites 97, uproar at the discovery that attendants of the Persian negotiator in 506 were armed; Men. Prot. fr. 10.5, Alans demand that Turkish envoys disarm.

⁹⁹ Men. Prot. fr. 12.4: *ton koinon tôn presbeôn thesmon*; cf. frs. 5.3, 19.1, 21.

¹⁰⁰ Priscus fr. 2; Procop. *Wars* 1.15.23; Men. Prot. fr. 6.1.

of the church that they willingly submitted to both the Christian faith and the emperor.¹⁰¹ Corippus' account of the reception of an Avar embassy at the court of Justin II makes the power dynamics explicit. As the Avars entered the audience chamber, they gazed in amazement at the imposing architectural space, which to them (so Corippus supposed) looked like an image of Heaven. They were struck dumb by the sight of the emperor in his purple robes seated on his golden throne and the lines of soldiers with their glittering armour. In response the Avars threw themselves on the floor in fear; even when their chief envoy tried to berate the emperor, he was soon reduced to a condition of awe-struck terror (Corippus, *In laud. Iust.* 3.191–401). This image of Roman might was also communicated at those meetings that occurred at the frontiers. When the *magister officiorum* Celer met the Persians at Dara in 506, the whole Roman campaigning army accompanied him (Ps.-Joshua Stylites 97).¹⁰² In all cases foreigners were expected to recognize the superiority of Roman power from these dazzling displays of opulence. The origins for such displays lie in those fourth-century encounters between emperors and barbarians on the frontiers where the array of troops attending the emperor demonstrated Roman military supremacy.¹⁰³

3. *Making peace*

The ultimate goal of diplomatic activity was to secure an outcome that was advantageous to both sides, but which, from the Roman perspective, could be represented as underpinning the Empire's supremacy over its neighbours. It was assumed that foreign leaders would come to terms following defeat or surrender; therefore any treaty would provide a statement of Roman superiority. As the Empire and its resources became ever more beleaguered after 400, however, this was a less easily realizable goal. Nevertheless the fiction if not the reality of imperial initiative and supremacy ought to be maintained, as was recognized by Khusro I who was willing in 574 to allow Tiberius and empress Sophia to save face after the loss of Dara had sent Justin II mad (Men. Prot. fr. 18.1). The payments that emperors regularly made to their enemies provide a good example. Such transactions could be costly, particularly to an Empire with strained resources: hence the newly crowned emperor Anastasius rejected a request from Kavadh that payments to the Persians should be continued precisely because of the costs incurred in his other conflicts.¹⁰⁴ More seriously, they could be taken to signify Roman weakness. Hence, when peace was made with Persia in

¹⁰¹ Paul. Silent. 983–90.

¹⁰² An unsuccessful example is provided by Heraclius' attempt to impress the Avar Chagan, which nearly resulted in the emperor's capture: *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 623, Nicephorus 10.

¹⁰³ See pp. 247–8 above; Whitby (1992a). ¹⁰⁴ Ps.-Joshua Stylites 20; cf. Blockley (1992) 88.

Justinian preferred to pay the agreed annual tribute in a single lump sum because he did not want to be seen as tributary to Khusro I.¹⁰⁵ The Romans claimed not to see payments in this light. Justinian paid money to the Huns 'out of pity not fear, because he did not wish to shed their blood', while Justin II reserved the right to cancel payments, asserting that they were a sign of imperial generosity and kindness, not an inalienable right to be claimed by Rome's enemies (Men. Prot. fr. 9.1, 12.6). Tribute payments could therefore be considered as gifts or signs of good faith. Gifts, which were often exchanged in diplomacy, were designed to impress the barbarians, in the way that Priscus' embassy impressed the Hunnic queen by offering her exotic goods otherwise unobtainable among the Huns.¹⁰⁶ Despite Roman protests payments and gifts nevertheless came to be accepted as an integral part of peace settlements, as in the repeated Persian demands for the Romans to share the cost of defending the passes in the Caucasus.¹⁰⁷

The ideological foundation of peace settlements is also apparent in the terminology used to articulate relationships between Roman and foreign rulers. The equality of Persian and Roman rulers was reflected by the way they referred to each other in correspondence as 'brothers', though when Tiberius II called himself the 'son' of Khusro I this reflected a need which subordinated him to his elder neighbour.¹⁰⁸ Relationships with northern barbarians were also couched in similar terms: the Avar envoy Targites presented his Khagan as Justin II's son, disingenuously arguing that the emperor should behave towards him with appropriate generosity.¹⁰⁹ On occasion western barbarians attempted to improve their diplomatic leverage by securing marriages with members of the imperial family: hence the Gothic leader Athaulf married Honorius' sister Galla Placidia and the Vandal Gaiseric sought to marry his son Huneric to Valentinian III's daughter Eudocia. This seems to reflect a diplomatic commonplace for the Germanic barbarians, among whom other marriage alliances are known.¹¹⁰ If the Romans were unwilling to offer their daughters and sisters as wives to barbarian kings they were prepared to offer honours and offices as a way of securing peace or achieving foreign policy aims by proxy. The Ostrogothic invasion of Italy was led by Theoderic as Zeno's *magister militum* with the rank of patrician.¹¹¹ The Frankish king Clovis received an honorary consulship from Anastasius, perhaps in recognition of his orthodox Catholic

¹⁰⁵ Procop. *Wars* 8.15.7.

¹⁰⁶ Priscus fr. 11.2; cf. Greatrex (1998) 117–18 for gifts and payments as a statement of good faith.

¹⁰⁷ Blockley (1985a). ¹⁰⁸ Whitby (2008).

¹⁰⁹ Brothers: Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 4.11.1; Amm. Marc. 17.5.3, 10; Malalas 18.44 Thurn = 449.19–450.1 Dindorf. Fathers and sons: Men. Prot. fr. 12.6, 20.1; Theophyl. Sim. 4.11.11.

¹¹⁰ O'Flynn (1983) 90–5; cf. Wolfram (1988) 307–15 for the use of marriages in Theoderic's foreign policy in the west.

¹¹¹ Heather (1991) 304–8.

beliefs which set him apart from the Arian kings who ruled elsewhere in the west (Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.38). Regardless of their recognition by the emperor such Germanic leaders ruled as kings, but the title (*rex* or *basileus*) was sometimes delegated to barbarian leaders, as it was to the Ghassanid phylarch Arethas (al-Harith) in 529. This involved no diminution of the emperor's authority, however: such kings were regarded as subordinates.¹¹²

The fine detail of treaty arrangements seems to have been governed by legal circumscriptions. The terminology is perhaps not as precise as we might wish, particularly in the literary sources.¹¹³ Agathias (5.1) called the Tzani of the Caucasus *hypospondoi* (bound under a treaty) and *katekoöi* (subjects); but Procopius referred to them prior to their treaty arrangements with Romans as *autonomoi* (independent) who nevertheless received annual payments in gold in a futile effort to prevent them from attacking Roman cities (*Wars* 1.15.19–25). Terms like *symmachos* (ally) or *symmachia* (alliance) reveal little about the legal basis upon which treaties were made. Other terms seem more precise: *foederati* and *hypospondoi* or *enspondoi* were bound by some form of treaty (*foedus* or *spondai*). Even so, the meaning of such terms could evolve over time. Procopius states that the Romans called the Goths *foederati* because they had been bound to the Empire by a *foedus* and had 'come into the Roman political system not in the condition of slaves, since they had not been conquered by the Romans, but on the basis of complete equality'. Procopius acknowledged, however, that the term was used in his own day to designate other kinds of troops regardless of their ethnicity. Moreover, his definition of *foederati* seems out of keeping with fourth-century usages of the term, where it was associated with surrender – although, even then, the term *foedus* could designate a variety of treaty arrangements.¹¹⁴

Of course treaties were not only connected with expressions of imperial ideology, but had practical concerns also. The text of the Romano-Persian accord of 562 preserved by Menander Protector provides excellent examples.¹¹⁵ Not only was it agreed that neither the Romans nor the Persians should attack each other, but both were required to keep a tight rein on their Arab allies and subject cities to prevent them from inflicting harm; nor were the Persians or Romans to attack each other's clients. Neither state was to fortify specified cities in the frontier zone, while the Romans were limited as to how many troops they could station at the fortress of Dara. Furthermore, communication across the frontier was to be strictly controlled: merchants were only permitted to trade at certain markets and were required to travel by specific roads; emigrants, refugees and deserters

¹¹² Arethas: Shahîd (1995) 95–124; cf. Chrysos (1978) more generally.

¹¹³ Obolensky (1994) 14–17; Pohl (1997a) esp. 78–87.

¹¹⁴ Procop. *Wars* 3.11.3–4, 8.5.13; cf. Heather (1997); Wirth (1997).

¹¹⁵ Men. Prot. fr. 6.1; commentary in Isaac (1992) 260–4.

were to be returned to their respective states; and ambassadors from both states were to be accorded treatment commensurate with their status and rank. Such terms responded to grievances expressed repeatedly throughout the period. Moreover, they show a concern not only with limiting conflict, but also with asserting Roman and Persian control over their respective spheres of interest. Practical concern for a state's subjects was also a feature of treaty negotiations: Roman subjects and allies were permitted to evacuate to Roman territory in Jovian's treaty with Persia in 363 (Amm. Marc. 25.7.11), following the Roman withdrawal from Persian Armenia in 576 and in the surrender of Sirmium to the Avars in 582 (Men. Prot. fr. 20.2, 27.3). Finally, all treaties seem to have been given a specific duration. That of 363 was intended to last thirty years; that of 408/9 a full hundred. Shorter terms were possible, such as in 506, when the peace was to endure for seven years (it lasted twenty). But the Eternal Peace of 532 was precisely that: it was intended to last for as long as the Persian and Roman empires endured.¹¹⁶ It did not, of course.

VII. GOD AND EMPIRE: RELIGION AND LATE ROMAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. *From pagan to Christian*

From its earliest days, Rome's achievements both at home and abroad were viewed as depending on the maintenance of the *pax deorum* through the proper observance of religious ritual.¹¹⁷ The traumas of the third century AD do not seem to have dented these beliefs, and under the tetrarchy the assumption remained that peace on the frontiers and victory in battle were secured by close cooperation between the emperors and their gods sealed by acts of piety. Imperial iconography emphasized the connections between imperial victory and religion, depicting members of the tetrarchy engaged in acts of sacrifice, while a relief on the north face of the arch of Galerius at Thessalonica showed the tetrarchs surrounded by the divine attributes of victory and of cosmic and universal dominion.¹¹⁸ The phenomenon was found also in imperial titles. Diocletian and Maximian were known respectively as Jovius and Herculus, reflecting how Maximian assisted Diocletian on an earthly plane just as Hercules assisted Jupiter on a cosmic one (*Pan. Lat.* 10.11.6). When neither security nor victory obtained, however, it suggested that the gods were angry. Against this background we can comprehend the remark made by an onlooker who, on the day the persecution edicts against the Christians were posted, exclaimed: 'These are the

¹¹⁶ Blockley (1992) 162.

¹¹⁷ For religion and foreign relations in the Republic and Principate see pp. 14–16 above.

¹¹⁸ L'Orange (1965) 66–8, 92–3; MacCormack (1981) 176–7.

victories of the Goths and Sarmatians!’ (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 13). Similarly, when Diocletian and his colleagues persecuted Manichaeism – a religion that had the misfortune to be a recent import ‘from the Persian people, our enemy’ – they condemned the sect as one that was intent on ‘driving out to the benefit of their depraved doctrine what was formerly granted to us by divine favour’.¹¹⁹ As threats to the *pax deorum* and stable world order created by the tetrarchs, Christianity and Manichaeism demanded ruthless extirpation.

The Christian Empire appropriated surprisingly much from pagan imperial ideology, a circumstance explicable by the manner in which Constantine came to announce his public support for Christianity. Shortly after his victory, as the Christian God’s champion, at the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312, Constantine, together with his eastern colleague Licinius, issued a directive to provincial governors about religious toleration. Its key statement was that the emperors would grant freedom of worship to all religions ‘to the end that whatever divinity there be on the heavenly seat may be favourably disposed and propitious towards us and all those placed under our authority’.¹²⁰ In other documents, where Constantine dealt directly with Church affairs, a more explicitly Christian formulation appeared. Writing to a north African official Constantine remarked that failure to resolve schism at Carthage ‘might perhaps arouse the Highest Deity not only against the human race, but also against myself, to whose care He has by His celestial nod committed the regulation of all things earthly’ (Optatus, *App.* 3). Just how traditional Constantine’s formulations were is revealed by the letter, written a year before the battle of the Milvian Bridge, in which the dying pagan tetrarch Galerius revoked edicts against Christians, who would be ‘bound to implore their own god for our safety, for that of the state, and for their own, so that on every side the state may be rendered secure’.¹²¹ Pagan and Christian expectations were the same: piety brought god-given rewards in terms of imperial security and stability. Rome’s imperial destiny received a Christian gloss: God had ordained the establishment of the Roman Empire in order to facilitate the spread of the Gospel (Euseb. *Tric.* 16.4).

Constantine’s adoption of Christianity nevertheless engendered changes in the notion of Empire that were to have ramifications for the role of religion in foreign policy, particularly in terms of the emperor’s universal dominion. With Constantine the phenomenon was given a new, tangible expression: Christian communities outside the Empire could become the emperor’s responsibility through his god-given duty to regulate ‘all things

¹¹⁹ *Collatio legum Romanarum et Mosaicarum (FIRA)* 15.3.

¹²⁰ Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 48 = Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 10.5.

¹²¹ Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 34 = Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 8.17.

earthly'. Preparations for a final war with Persia in 337 certainly saw Christianity loom large in the emperor's mind: his entourage included bishops who would beseech God for Constantine's victory.¹²² Already under the first Christian emperor, then, a connection was established between the new faith and the conduct of foreign policy

2. *Christianity, war and diplomacy*

Although some Christian writers of the pre-Constantinian age had been hostile to the notion of war, the emperors' adoption of Christianity did not prompt a move towards pacifism.¹²³ Rather it enhanced notions of imperial dominion and, as such, could provide new pretexts for war. In 421 Theodosius II was prepared to go to war with Persia to avenge Christians persecuted there, even in contravention of an existing treaty.¹²⁴ Later wars against Persia were also cast as holy wars, notably Heraclius' campaigns against Khusro II in 622–8 which liberated Jerusalem: the city's patriarch Zacharias was restored to his see from Persian captivity; the relic of the True Cross, stolen by Khusro's troops, was returned to the church of the Holy Sepulchre; and at Constantinople a proclamation of the victory, casting Heraclius as God's champion and Khusro as the embodiment of impiety, was read out from the *ambo* of the great church of Haghia Sophia.¹²⁵ Such actions provide eloquent symbols of the theory articulated in Justinian's justifications of his foreign wars. Just as the grand reconquest began, he issued a *novella* stating that peace with Persia and victory over the Vandals, Alans and Moors had been granted by God; furthermore, the emperor hoped that God would 'consent to our establishing our Empire over the rest of those whom the Romans of old ruled from the boundaries of one ocean to the other'.¹²⁶ Thus imperial victory and universal dominion were a gift bequeathed by God.

An important consequence of this developing political theology was that outsiders came to regard adherence to Christianity as overlapping to some extent with loyalty to the Roman Empire. The phenomenon is particularly visible in Romano-Persian relations. On the whole the attitude of the Sasanid kings towards Christianity was determined by the internal concerns of the Persian kingdom.¹²⁷ Christians had been persecuted in Persia even before Constantine's conversion. During the reign of Vahram I a number of

¹²² Crusade: Fowden (1993) 96; but contrast Cameron and Hall (1999) 335–7.

¹²³ Haldon (1999) 13–17; Ubina (2000). ¹²⁴ Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.18.6–8; Holum (1977).

¹²⁵ Jerusalem restored: Georg. Pis. *In restitutionem S. Crucis*; Theophanes, *Chron.* 328.13–5, AM 6120; Sebeos 131; victory statement: *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 628; on the campaign, Butler (1902) 116–37.

¹²⁶ Justinian, *Nov.* 30.11.2; the theory is reiterated elsewhere, for example the prefaces to the *Digest* and *Institutes*.

¹²⁷ In general, see Brock (1982).

martyrdoms occurred, but this belongs to a period when the Persian court was under the exceptional influence of Kartir, the Zoroastrian high priest, who advocated a harsh policy of repression against a variety of religions – Christianity, but also Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Manichaeism – that he perceived as challenging Zoroastrianism.¹²⁸ Individual Christians could suffer persecution when they came into conflict with the Persian religious authorities: indeed, the war begun in 421 had been prompted by the execution of Christians who had destroyed a Zoroastrian fire altar.¹²⁹ At other times the Persian kings were often indulgent towards the Christians. Shapur I treated the Christians he deported from the eastern Roman provinces so well that they seemed better off under Persia than Roman rule.¹³⁰ Similarly, in the aftermath of his conquest of Palestine in 613–14, Khusro II took steps to ensure that Christians there were treated well.¹³¹ Even so, Constantine's conversion together with his assertion that Persia's Christians were the Christian Roman emperor's personal responsibility meant that the fortunes of Christians living under Sasanid rule became politically charged.¹³² The fifth book of the *Demonstrations* attributed to Aphrahat, which was composed while Constantine was preparing to attack Shapur, expressed the hope that the Romans would be victorious, and that a rightful, Christian king (Constantine) would prevail over an evil, pagan one (Shapur II).¹³³ Persecution under the Sasanids was generally sporadic, but intensified during conflicts with Rome with concentrations of martyrdoms under Shapur II, Vahram V and Yazdgerd II.¹³⁴ On the other hand faith in Christ and loyalty to the Persian king were compatible: the martyr Pusai refused to swear oaths by Persian gods, but acknowledged Shapur II as *Shâhanshâh* (king of kings).¹³⁵ The Nestorian dispute, so disruptive to the Roman Empire, rescued Persian Christians since their adherence to this heresiarch alienated them from the imperial Church. During persecution Persian Christians plainly saw the Roman Empire as a haven of safety. When Vahram V began to repress the Church in 420 Christians fled to Roman territory to enlist imperial help (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.18.2–3). War soon followed and in the ensuing atmosphere of suspicion an official prosecuting an apostate from Zoroastrianism to Christianity told Vahram that Christians were suspect because 'they hold the same faith as the Romans, and they are in entire agreement together: should a war interpose between the two empires these Christians will turn out to be defectors from

¹²⁸ Chaumont (1988) 99–120; cf. Frye (1984) 303–4 for Kartir's influence over Vahram.

¹²⁹ Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 5.38; Theophanes, *Chron.* 82.25–83.2 (AM 5906). Persecution of individuals: Brock (1982) 5–7.

¹³⁰ *Chron. Seert* 2 (PO 4.222–3).

¹³¹ Sebeos 116, with Thomson and Howard-Johnston (1999) 208–9. ¹³² Brock (1982) 8.

¹³³ Brock (1982) 7–8; cf. Barnes (1985b) arguing that Aphrahat wrote *before* Constantine's death.

¹³⁴ Brock (1982) 5 and n. 15. ¹³⁵ Brock (1982) 14.

our side in any fighting, and through playing false will bring down your power’.

The Persians were by no means the only ones to equate Christianity with Roman power: the Goths made the same connection, since the perception that Christianity was somehow identifiable with the Roman Empire probably provoked persecution.¹³⁶ Of course the first appearance of Christian groups in Gothic territory, as in Persia, pre-dated Constantine’s conversion. When the Goths raided Asia Minor in the mid-third century, Christians were among the captives carried off, and the integration of such Christians into Gothic society led to some evangelization (Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.5). But imperial initiative by Constantius II was also a key factor and determined the Arian character of Gothic Christianity for the next two centuries: the anniversary of his death was recorded in a sixth-century Gothic martyrology.¹³⁷ The conversion of the Goths is intertwined with Romano-Gothic international relations. Certainly, when choosing ambassadors to negotiate with Christian emperors, Gothic leaders seem to have seen Christians as particularly well suited: thus Ulfila was sent to Constantius II; later, on the eve of the battle of Adrianople, Fritigern chose Christian clergy to negotiate terms with Valens.¹³⁸ Eunapius alleged that the Goths claimed to be Christians to persuade Roman authorities to accept their migration into the Empire in 376.¹³⁹

If the Empire’s neighbours were increasingly associating Christianity with Roman power, they had plenty of encouragement from the emperors who recognized that Christianity could be harnessed to the needs of foreign policy. Whether or not his final war with Persia was a holy war Constantine’s letter to Shapur showed him using Christianity as an instrument in his foreign policy. Like his father, Constantius II was prone to think of his rule in universalist, cosmic terms, and was convinced that God guided his destiny and guaranteed his victories, in return for which he had to strive for unity in the Church. Sacred duty and universalism affected Constantius’ foreign policy, and he sent Ulfila to evangelize the Goths, seeking through this to encourage them to live in peaceful coexistence with the Empire (Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.5). He repeated the experiment beyond other frontiers: under his aegis, Christian missionaries were sent to Himyar and Axum, both efforts apparently designed to outflank Persian interests in the region.¹⁴⁰

By the sixth century the notion that mission could be used to buttress Roman foreign policy was firmly established. Justinian’s treaty with Persia in 561 included an appendix that guaranteed the rights of Christians

¹³⁶ Heather and Matthews (1991) 103–17. ¹³⁷ Heather and Matthews (1991) 129–30.

¹³⁸ Ulfila: Philostorgius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.5; Fritigern: Amm. Marc. 31.12.8. The practice was also adopted by the Persians: Men. Prot. fr. 16.1, 23.7.

¹³⁹ Eunap. fr. 48.2; Heather (1986). ¹⁴⁰ Fowden (1993) 110–12.

living under the Sasanids so long as they did not to engage in missionary activity among the Persians.¹⁴¹ This last term, surely insisted upon by the Persians, suggests that conversion to Christianity was potentially a pro-Roman action. Justinian had used Christianity to further his ambitions across other frontiers, including in Himyar.¹⁴² Moreover, he stood as god-father to barbarian kings who came to Constantinople for baptism. Grepes of the Heruli, after being baptized with some of his chief officials and members of his family, was sent back to his kingdom with the understanding that Justinian could call on him at any time for assistance. The baptism of Grod, king of the Crimean Huns, was accompanied by a treaty that set out arrangements for the defence of the city of Bosphorus and trading relationships between local Romans and the Huns.¹⁴³ Perhaps the most remarkable instance of the role of Christianity in international relations occurred under Maurice. When Khusro II was ejected from his kingdom by a palace coup in 590 Maurice gave him sanctuary, from which he was able to regroup his forces and reclaim the Persian throne. Christianity played a key role in these events. Khusro sought Maurice's assistance by appealing to the notion that the Persian and Roman states had been ordained by God. He dangled the prospect of conversion to Christianity to bishops Domitian of Melitene and Gregory of Antioch, and on setting out to regain his throne, Khusro prayed to St Sergius of Resafa to assist him; later he bestowed lavish gifts on the martyr's shrine.¹⁴⁴

The prominent place of Christianity in the conception of international relations was also reflected in the minutiae of diplomatic activity. Treaties between the Romans and their enemies were sealed by oaths sworn in churches or on copies of scripture.¹⁴⁵ Christians and their clergy have already been glimpsed acting in negotiations between Romans and Persians and Goths. Indeed, one of the most prominent roles for Christianity in late Roman international relations was providing ambassadors from among the clergy: during the Persian siege of Bezabde on the River Tigris in 360, for example, the city's bishop volunteered to go to the enemy camp to negotiate a truce (Amm. Marc. 20.7.7). Diplomatic activity by bishops became more pronounced, particularly in the west, as the edifice of the Roman state collapsed and bishops increasingly took on leadership roles in their cities. When the Lombards invaded Italy in 568 the surrender of Treviso was negotiated by the city's bishop, Felix (Paul. Diac. *Hist. Lang.* 2.12). Such endeavours were not wholly divorced, however, from the apparatus of the state; in large measure the increased importance of bishops in diplomatic efforts reflected an increasing congruence between imperial and

¹⁴¹ Men. Prot. fr. 6.1. ¹⁴² Greatrex (1998) 225–39.

¹⁴³ Malalas 18.6, 18.14 Thurn = 427.17–428.4, 431.16–433.2 Dindorf.

¹⁴⁴ Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.18, 21–2; Whitby (1988); Key Fowden (1999) 134–40.

¹⁴⁵ Theophanes, *Chron.* 76.11–14 (AM 5894); Men. Prot. fr. 25.1.

ecclesiastical structures in the late antique world. When, for example, bishop Leo I of Rome made his famous embassy to Attila in 452, he was accompanied by the ex-consul Avienus and the former prefect Trygetius, who had previously negotiated with the Vandals on behalf of Valentinian III (Prosper, *Chron.* ss.aa. 435, 452). In some cases it is clear that clerics were chosen deliberately as envoys: both Arcadius and Theodosius II sent Marutha, bishop of Martyropolis, to the court of Yazdgerd I.¹⁴⁶ The reasons for selecting such bishops to serve in embassies were a mixture of deliberate choice and opportunism. Domitian and Gregory, who were meant to further Khusro's conversion (Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.18), were noted for their learning and eloquence. Marutha too was known for his skill and it is recorded that he cured the shah's son of demonic possession. But it was important also that his see was located in the midst of a great slew of Christian communities that straddled the frontier between Rome, Armenia and Sasanid Persia, thus making him well connected and well informed about affairs across the region. Moreover Marutha was famously multilingual, even for a man from such a cultural crossroads, making him an ideal candidate for a mission to the Persian court.

The deployment of Christianity in international relations could also present problems. Christian Armenia in the fourth century saw a rift within the kingdom as the clergy remained loyal to the creed of Nicaea, while the kings espoused instead the Arian theology shared by many emperors of the period.¹⁴⁷ In the fifth and sixth centuries the conversion of many non-Roman peoples to Christianity complicated matters when Romans and barbarians subscribed to different definitions of orthodoxy.¹⁴⁸ In spite of such difficulties Christianity nevertheless came to occupy a central place in the configuration and implementation of late Roman foreign relations. The emperor was the viceroy of God, ruling over an *oikoumenê* on earth much as the Divine Creator did in the cosmos. The stage was set for the development of medieval Byzantium's Christian commonwealth.¹⁴⁹

VIII. CONCLUSION: THE AVARS AT SINGIDUNUM AND SIRMIMUM

In the late 570s and early 580s the cities of Singidunum and Sirmium on the Danube frontier came under attack from the massed war bands of the Avar tribes. An uneasy peace had obtained between Romans and Avars for some years, but now the Avar leader, the Khagan Baian, adopted a more aggressive policy towards the Empire. Distracted by the demands of war with Persia, imperial forces were incapable of mounting a coherent response in the Balkans. Local communities and garrisons throughout

¹⁴⁶ Key Fowden (1999) 52–6; Whitby (1988) 300, 305. ¹⁴⁷ Garsoïan (1967).

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Shahîd (1995) 990–5. ¹⁴⁹ Obolensky (1971) *passim*; cf. Fowden (1993) 100–37.

the region were thrown back on their own resources and sought salvation through diplomacy rather than confrontation. At Singidunum the Roman authorities sought to secure their city by persuading the Khagan to swear not to attack it. Baian agreed and swore first his barbarian oath and then a Roman one, sworn on a copy of the Bible offered to him by the city's archbishop. Baian, however, was not to be distracted from his wider ambitions in the region and, after leaving Singidunum, pressed on to besiege Sirmium. The emperor Tiberius II was appalled: the Khagan had ignored the treaty he had made and the oath he had sworn; divine vengeance could be expected to follow, but in the meantime Tiberius stated that he would never abandon any part of Roman territory. His ambition was thwarted, however: Baian's investment of Sirmium placed the city's inhabitants under horrendous pressure, while Tiberius, committed to wars elsewhere, simply could not spare the troops to relieve the city. In the end, he agreed to cede it to the Avars; thus another part of the Balkans was lost to Roman control (Men. Prot. fr. 25.1–27.3).

These events at Singidunum and Sirmium provide an appropriate snapshot of the predicament in which the Empire found itself in the late sixth century. Tiberius II's circumstances contrast markedly with those enjoyed by Theodosius I some two hundred years earlier. First, the Empire's ability to fend off its enemies through acts of war had been compromised by the depletion of resources, itself exacerbated by the competing interests of several frontiers. In these years of turmoil in the Balkans Tiberius had also had to refuse requests for assistance from the beleaguered cities of Italy. Meanwhile his envoy Zacharias, meeting with the Persian ambassador Andigan at Dara, was told quite bluntly that, given the number of wars the Romans were fighting, the last thing they could afford was another with Persia. Zacharias rejected this notion, claiming that the Romans were invincible and that they would outlast the Persians in any war. Zacharias' claims, however confidently they were stated, were as empty as Tiberius' initial refusal to give up Roman territory. The Romans continued to state the ideal of their superiority over their foes, but more often they sought to achieve it through diplomacy. It was a specifically late antique brand of diplomacy too. Christianity played a part in it, as in the oath Baian swore and the expectation that God would smite him for breaking it, but Tiberius had earlier tried to deflect the Avar assault by seeking to foment war between Avars and Slavs. Through such machinations Tiberius sought to realize the ideology that the Roman emperor was still the supreme authority on earth. But while the Empire would still assert its military supremacy, notably in Heraclius' invasion of Persia, the harsh reality was that by this stage its goals were achieved better by diplomacy than by war.

CHAPTER 8

MILITARY FORCES

HUGH ELTON

The Roman army developed continually from the third to the seventh centuries AD, adapting to changes brought about by enemies beyond the imperial borders, as well as to changes in the structure of the Roman imperial state itself.¹ Along with the change went much continuity and the army was always a standing force of long-service soldiers commanded by professional officers. This examination of the forces of the Roman Empire is divided into three parts: the structure of armies, the structure of regiments and the structure of individual careers.²

Although the idea of an army often suggests rigid structures and placing square pegs into round holes, the forces of the Roman state were characterized by their structural flexibility and standard practices were often bypassed if necessary.³ Almost any imperial official could act as a military commander, regardless of whether he was of the 'correct' rank, or even if he was a soldier. Thus in 361 Iovius, who as *quaestor sacri palatii* usually dealt with imperial correspondence, commanded part of Julian's army in the civil war against Constantius II and in 553 Bonus, who as *quaestor exercitus* was a senior supply officer on the lower Danube, was in charge of the garrison at Luca in Italy during the reconquest of Italy (Amm. Marc. 21.8.3; Agathias 1.19.1).

Such flexibility is the sort of detail that tends to be preserved by historians. The core of our knowledge of how the army operated during this period comes from two historians, Ammianus Marcellinus and Procopius of Caesarea. Ammianus served as a soldier in the mid-fourth century and took part in Julian's campaign in Persia in 363. Procopius served on Belisarius' staff in Persia, Africa and Italy in the 530s. Both tell us much about how systems worked. However, they are often weak on numbers and technical terms, because these details were not appropriate for the literary genre of history. Thus Ammianus Marcellinus described two field army cavalry regiments in

¹ Still basic are Jones (1964) ch. 17 and Grosse (1920); more recently, Elton (1996b); Haldon (1999); Lee (1998); Nicasie (1998); Whitby (2000b); review articles, Carrié and Janniard (2000–2).

² This chapter contains a large number of technical terms, italicized in Latin and Greek; for further details of individuals, see entries in the relevant volumes of *PLRE*.

³ Crump (1973).

359 as *turmae* when the technical term was *vexillatio*. Procopius frequently referred to officers in vague or anachronistic terms as *strategoï* (generals) or *archontes* (commanders).⁴ In contrast a valuable source of technical vocabulary is the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which lists officials and their staffs around AD 400, though with some later updating.⁵ For military officials the subordinate officers and sometimes their headquarters are listed, allowing us to construct an army list and some regional deployments. However, its precise date and the way in which information was entered and updated are still uncertain.⁶ The accounts of various historians and the details in the *Notitia Dignitatum* can be supplemented by laws and papyri, inscriptions and theoretical handbooks. Late Roman legislation often recorded matters of military concern, and book seven of the fifth-century Theodosian Code was devoted to military affairs.⁷ Papyri, for the most part from Egypt, include the private papers of Flavius Abinnaeus, who commanded the *ala quinta praelectorum* based at Dionysias in the mid-fourth century. Much information about logistics comes from the Panopolis Papyri, an archive which contains numerous receipts relating to the supply of troops in Egypt between 298 and 300.⁸ Many inscriptions record the burial of soldiers, with significant collections from graveyards at Concordia in Italy, Apamea in Syria and Istanbul in Turkey.⁹ Other inscriptions commemorate building by military units. Like the historians, these are often a good source for the titles of men and units, showing how official terminology was actually used. Lastly, a number of handbooks give advice as to how armies should be structured and operate, though this material is more often theoretical than descriptive. The *Strategicon* written by the emperor Maurice (582–602) is the most useful document here.¹⁰ Despite the large number of sources of various types there remain many gaps in our knowledge.

Quite apart from our ignorance, understanding the structural organization of the army is complicated for a number of reasons. The late Roman army is an enormous topic in terms of time (some four centuries), space (the Mediterranean basin and beyond) and numbers (over half a million men, over a thousand regiments). We should thus expect to find regional variation and change over time, features which are made more complicated by the fragmentary nature of the sources and their different characters. Particular problems are presented by the technical vocabulary. As we have already seen, even ex-soldiers did not always use technical vocabulary. The Latin term *dux*, for example, could be used generically, to mean any leader

⁴ Amm. Marc. 18.8.1–2; Nicasie (1998) 44. ⁵ Seeck (1876) remains the standard edition.

⁶ Brennan (1996), (1998a); Kulikowski (2000). ⁷ Mommsen (1905).

⁸ Bell et al. (1962); Skeat (1964).

⁹ Concordia, Hoffmann (1963) and Tomlin (1972); Apamea, Balty (1988); Istanbul, Kalkan and Sahin (1995).

¹⁰ Dain (1967); Dennis (1981b); English trans. Dennis (1984).

of troops, or precisely, as a rank. Although all military administration was theoretically carried out in Latin until the early sixth century, many private papers, histories and local documents were written in Greek. The official Latin terms in such documents were not consistently translated into Greek, so the rank of tribune, in Latin *tribunus*, might be transliterated as *tribounos* or translated as *chiliarchos*. However, in some sources, *chiliarchos* was used as the equivalent of *dux*, a much higher rank than tribune. Lastly, from the end of the second century, units were often referred to by their base rather than their official title, a practice sometimes found in official documents. The *Notitia Dignitatum* thus records that the garrison of the Saxon shore in Britain included the *equites stablesiani Garianenses*, named after their base at Gariannonor. This practice can mask unit identities. In the case of the *numerus* at Elephantine recorded in sixth-century papyri we can only guess that this is the *cohors 1 Felix Theodosiana* recorded in the *Notitia Dignitatum* from the end of the fourth century.¹¹

I. ARMY STRUCTURES

This first section deals with the structure of the Roman army above the level of operational units. Three major phases can be distinguished between the mid-third and mid-seventh century, the period between Gallienus and Constantine (c. 260–320), the Constantinian to Maurician period (c. 320–580) and the Maurician period (c. 580 onwards). Down to the mid-third century most Roman troops (infantry legions and auxiliary cohorts and cavalry *alae*) were assigned to provinces on the edges of the empire under the command of provincial governors. For offensives, expeditionary forces were drawn from the whole empire, usually led by the emperor in person. These forces normally returned to their bases at the end of a campaign, but from the reign of Gallienus (253–68) frequent military crises meant that the emperor was continually on campaign.¹² The troops with the emperor became known informally as the *comitatenses* and functioned as the core of a field army. At its heart was *legio 11 Parthica*, to which were added detachments from legions (*vexillationes*) and newly created units, especially cavalry regiments known as *Illyriciani*.¹³ The Danubian legions *IV Flavia*, *VII Claudia*, and *XI Claudia* were particularly relied on during the first tetrarchy.¹⁴ When there was more than one emperor, e.g. during the tetrarchy, each had his own *comitatenses*. Diocletian's was formed around the legions of the *Ioviani* and *Herculiani*, the élite cavalry regiments of *lanciarrii* and *comites* and new units split off from existing units (*lanciarrii*

¹¹ *Not. Dign. occ.* 28.17; Keenan (1990). ¹² Cooper (1968); Ibeji (1991).

¹³ Brennan (1998a); Scharf (2001); Ritterling (1903); cf. p. 73 above.

¹⁴ Van Berchem (1952); Seston (1955); Speidel (1987) = *AE* 1994.1797; *P Oxy.* 43.

and *equites promoti*). These troops could travel extensively and Aurelius Gaius in the late third century served on both the Rhine and Danube, as well as in Asia Minor, Syria, Gaul, Spain, Mauretania and Egypt.¹⁵

In the mid-third century a new office of *dux* began to appear in border provinces. *Duces* could command frontier regions, e.g. the *dux ripae Mesopotamiae* at Dura-Europus, although similar officials in north Africa and Europe were still under the authority of the provincial governor.¹⁶ Other *duces* led small field armies, e.g. Aurelius Augustianus who commanded a force including a pair of *vexillationes* from *legio II Parthica* and *legio III Augusta* in Macedonia under Gallienus.¹⁷ The military roles of *duces* were expanded by Diocletian who began separating military and civil hierarchies, establishing new *duces* to command troops in some provinces and confining provincial governors to civil administration. These new frontier commands often covered more than one province, producing officers such as the *dux Pannoniae Primae et Norici Ripensis* or the *dux Aegypti Thebaidos utrarumque Libyarum*. The process of separating military and civil hierarchies took place very slowly and some governors retained military functions into Constantine's reign, like Arrius Maximus who governed Syria Coele after 324. In Tripolitania the governor still had some military authority well into the fourth century and the province's first *dux* is not attested until 393. At the end of the fourth century, the *Notitia Dignitatum* records two ducates in Britain, twelve along the length of the Rhine and Danube, eight in the east and seven in Africa.¹⁸

Land troops were supported by the Roman navy which was part of the army and not a separate service. Standing fleets of warships (for fighting) and merchantmen (for supply and transport of troops) were based throughout the empire.¹⁹ Individual squadrons were commanded by *praefecti*. In the west the major fleet was based at Ravenna, though there were other fleets in Italy, Gaul, Africa and Britain. In the east Constantinople became the major fleet base, while other smaller fleets were based in Egypt, Antioch and the Crete–Rhodes region. As part of the army naval expeditions were commanded by generals. In 324 Constantine's fleet was commanded by his son Crispus, while Licinius' was under an otherwise unknown Amandus. Later in the sixth century Belisarius reconquered Africa as the *magister militum per Orientem*.²⁰

The second major period was between Constantine and Maurice (c. 320–580). Although each of the tetrarchs had his own field army, Constantine's defeat of his civil war rivals by 324 allowed the recreation of a single field army attached to the emperor. Constantine now made a permanent distinction between the field army troops (*comitatenses*) and the

¹⁵ AE 1981.777. ¹⁶ Gilliam (1941). ¹⁷ AE 1934.193. ¹⁸ Mann (1977).

¹⁹ Kienast (1966); Reddé (1986). ²⁰ Elton (1996b) 97; *Cod. Iust.* 1.27.2 (534).

border troops (variously known as *limitanei*, *burgarii* or *ripenses*). As far as military administration was concerned border troops differed from field army troops only in physical standards, service length and tax benefits on retirement.²¹ The border troops remained under the command of *duces*, but a new structure was created for the field armies. Initially, Constantine led the new field army himself but by the end of his reign it was commanded by two new officers, the *magister peditum* and *magister equitum*. *Magistri peditum* and *equitum* both commanded infantry and cavalry, with common variants in these titles including *magister utriusque militiae* and *magister equitum et peditum*.²² This imperial field army always accompanied the emperor and units in this force travelled widely. The brigade of the Celtae and Petulantes was part of Julian's army in Gaul in the late 350s, before travelling with him to Illyricum in 361 and to Persia in 363. It then returned to Gaul with Valentinian I in 364 and was still with the imperial army in Italy in the early fifth century.²³

After Constantine's death in 337 his three sons divided the empire and the imperial field army, creating separate field armies in Gaul (Constantine II), Illyricum (Constans) and the east (Constantius II). Both Constantine and Constans had their own *magister equitum* and *magister peditum*, while Constantius II divided his forces between the Balkans and the east (where he commanded himself) with a *magister militum* in each region. This structure changed after 353 when Constantius II became sole emperor. There now developed a central imperial army with two *magistri militum* (which from at least the 390s was known as the praesental army). Although this army was administered by two equally ranked *magistri militum praesentales*, operationally it functioned as a single force, sometimes referred to as 'the great army'. There were also three regional field armies, in Gaul usually based at Trier, in Illyricum at Sirmium and in the east at Antioch.²⁴

The structure of regional field armies supported by praesental armies remained intact until the seventh century, although the numbers of regional field armies and the structure of the praesental armies changed. Thus with Valentinian and Valens' division of the empire in 364 two praesental armies were created. The western praesental army was based in Italy, often at Milan or Ravenna. The eastern praesental army was based at Constantinople. Hoffmann argued that this was when most field army regiments were divided into *seniores* and *iuniores*. This is probably the case, though at least one regiment had such a title in 356, the *Iovii Cornuti seniores*, and units created after 364 were sometimes given *seniores* or *iuniores* titles.²⁵ The Illyrian field army was under western control until Valens' death in 378,

²¹ Isaac (1988); van Berchem (1952); MacMullen (1963) 153. ²² Demandt (1970).

²³ Elton (1996b) 208. ²⁴ Elton (1996b) 209–10; *P Oxy.* 56.3872.

²⁵ Hoffmann (1969–70) 1.117–30; Drew-Bear (1977); Nicasie (1998) 24–35; Scharf (1991b).

after which it was transferred to the eastern empire. A second Danubian field army was created in Thrace (based at Marcianopolis) during the 370s to reinforce the Illyrian army. These regional field armies were supplemented by small field armies (less than 10,000 strong) in western Illyricum and Spain, led by *comites rei militaris*. The western Illyrian army was probably a response to the transfer of the Illyrian field army to eastern control after 378 and the Spanish army was perhaps created after the Vandal invasion of Spain in 409.²⁶ An occasional development was the creation of new praesental armies during a usurpation, like that of Constantine III, drawn from troops in Britain and Gaul, though these were rapidly reintegrated into the rest of the army at the end of the civil war. A last fourth-century development was the centralization of the western praesental army under the command of the *magister peditum*, a result of Arbogast's and Stilicho's political domination.

Field and border troops were part of a single military system. The *duces* were responsible to the *magister militum* of their region, at least from the reign of Valentinian I and probably earlier.²⁷ *Comitatenses* could be transferred from field armies and attached to ducates, e.g. in Britain in response to an attack in 367 and in Africa from 373 in response to Firmus' revolt.²⁸ If this happened the *duces* were promoted to *comites rei militaris* (another new office created by Constantine). At the end of the fourth century there were seven border commands under *comites*, the Saxon shore, the Armorican shore, Egypt, Africa (i.e. modern Tunisia), Tingitania, Britain and the southern Rhine (*comes Argentoratensis*), as well as two internal commands in Isauria and Italy.²⁹ These promotions were temporary, and with the removal of the field army troops, the position could revert to a ducate. Thus Isauria was under a *comes* in the 350s and in the fifth century but in 382 was under a *dux*.³⁰

Troops could also be transferred from border commands to field armies. Julian's expedition against Persia in 363 included two border legions, *I* and *II Armeniaca*. In other cases, particularly on the Persian frontier, *duces* led their troops on campaigns alongside *comitatenses*. In 528 the two *duces* of Phoenice Libanensis, the brothers Cutzes and Buzes, led troops to reinforce Belisarius' field army, though these forces never returned to border service. Border troops also carried out limited operations, e.g. in 528 the *duces* of Phoenice and Euphratensis, together with some Arab phylarchs and a small force of *comitatenses* pursued the Arab leader Alamundarus (Procop. *Wars* 1.13.5–8; Malalas, 18.16 Thurn, 435.2–17 Dindorf). The transferred units were given the status of *pseudocomitatenses*, a title first attested in 365, though the

²⁶ Elton (1996b) 200, 209–10.

²⁷ Mann (1977) 11–15; hierarchy, *Cod. Theod.* 7.17.1 (412); *Nov. Theod.* 24.1 (443); *Cod. Iust.* 12.59.8 (Leo).

²⁸ Elton (1996b) 210. ²⁹ Mann (1976) 7. ³⁰ Jones (1964) 125 and n. 26.

practice occurred earlier. Thus *legio I* and *II Armeniaca* were based at Bezabde in 360 when it was lost to the Persians. After their transfer to the field army they were still under the command of the *magister militum per Orientem* as *legiones pseudocomitatenses* in the 390s. This practice continued throughout the late Roman period and in 594 the *magister militum* Peter tried to incorporate a regiment of border troops from Aseumus, close to the Danube, into his field army.³¹

In the fifth-century west, the structure of the two major field armies, the regional army in Gaul and the praesental army in Italy changed little. Parts, at least, of the Gallic army continued to exist into the 460s under Aegidius and then Syagrius, outlasting direct imperial control of Gaul.³² The same is true of forces in Italy. The border troops in Raetia and Noricum continued to serve into the 450s while the praesental army put up stiff resistance to Theoderic's invasion in 489 under the *magister militum* Libila (Eugippius 4.1–4, 20; *Anon. Val.* 11.51–4). In the east the only change was in Asia Minor, where at some point in the fifth century new *comitivae* (of Pisidia, Pamphylia and Lycaonia) were added and Isauria was permanently upgraded to a *comitiva*, probably in response to problems with bandits (*Cod. Iust.* 12.59.10 (472)). The collapse of the western Empire involved the loss of troops and territory, but there was little structural impact on the surviving eastern Empire, though the Illyrian army may have acquired more responsibility.

The changes from the sixth century are more minor modifications than responses to western collapse. At the end of the fifth century Anastasius (491–518) created a command of the Long Walls for the local defence of Constantinople, commanded by a *vicarius* of the praesental army and supplied by a *vicarius* of the eastern praetorian prefect (Justinian, *Nov.* 26 (535)). Units of field army troops continued to be assigned to border commands. This caused problems on some occasions, forcing Anastasius to issue a law in 492 making it explicit that *duces* were in command of all *comitatenses* troops in their area of responsibility.³³ Under Justinian (527–65) there were more significant changes.³⁴ The eastern field army was divided into two sectors in 528. In the north was a new post of *magister militum per Armeniam* (based at Theodosiopolis), who had direct authority over the five Armenian ducates; the south remained under the *magister militum per Orientem*.³⁵ Extra *duces* were added to the eastern army's command, at Circesium in Mesopotamia and Palmyra in Phoenice Libanensis. The two *vicarii* of the Long Walls were replaced in 535 with a single *praetor Thraciae* with military

³¹ *Cod. Theod.* 8.1.10 (365); Amm. Marc. 20.7.1; Malalas 13.23 Thurn = 332.9–13 Dindorf; *Not. Dign.* or. 7.49, 50; Theophyl. Sim. 7.3.1–7.

³² Elton (1992); MacGeorge (2002) 153–8. ³³ *Cod. Iust.* 12.35.18 (492); Jones (1964) 660–1.

³⁴ Ravegnani (1988); Müller (1912). ³⁵ *Cod. Iust.* 1.29.5; Greatrex (1998) 154.

and logistical duties.³⁶ The large expeditionary forces sent to the west in 468, 533 and 535 were all created by pooling various field army units under a *magister militum* drawn from elsewhere in the empire. Thus Basiliscus (whose 468 expedition against the Vandals included western troops) was either *magister militum per Thracias* or an eastern praesental *magister militum* (Priscus fr. 53.1). Belisarius invaded Africa and Italy as *magister militum per Orientem*. Following the Justinianic reconquests new field armies were created under *magistri militum* in Africa (in 534 based at Carthage), Italy (554? at Ravenna) and Spain (552?). At the same time *limitanei* units were re-established in Africa and possibly by Narses in Italy. Although Procopius stated that eastern frontier troops were not paid by Justinian, this is an exaggeration.³⁷

The last major phase was the Maurician period (c. 580 onwards). Under the emperor Maurice (582–602) a series of major changes took place in the structure of the field armies. Maurice had a military career before becoming emperor so it is tempting to see the reforms and the composition of the *Strategicon* as the result of his own experiences.³⁸ After the loss of Sirmium to the Avars in 582 the Illyrian field army disappears from our sources and was probably incorporated into the Thracian field army. The *magistri militum* in Italy and Africa were upgraded to exarchs (first mentioned in 584 and 591) who had authority over their praetorian prefects, similar in concept to the *praetor Thraciae* and perhaps making it easier to supply troops in regions still recovering from the wars of reconquest. In the seventh century the two *magistri militum* of the praesental army, now renamed the *Opsikion*, were formally replaced by a single commander. This post was the *comes Opsikion* (possibly attested as early as 626, otherwise 680).³⁹

In the seventh century the empire was severely disrupted by the Persian invasions, but the system of border troops supported by regional and praesental field armies continued to function after Heraclius' reconquest into the 630s. Field armies were still mobile and troops from the Thracian army helped defend Egypt against the Arabs in 640 (Nicephorus 23.4). However, the enormous losses of territory to the Arabs and Avars forced changes to be made. As territory was lost, the field armies were established as territorial commands (themes) in Asia Minor, though (with the exception of the *Opsikion* under its *comes*) still under *magistri militum*.⁴⁰ The *Opsikion* was based around Constantinople and the north-west of Asia Minor, the eastern field army (*Anatolikon*) was in the south-east, the Armenian field army

³⁶ Jones (1964) 271; Justinian, *Nov.* 26 (535).

³⁷ *Cod. Iust.* 1.27.2 (534); *ILS* 835; Casey (1996) showing problems with Procop. *Secret History* 24.12–14.

³⁸ Whitby (1988).

³⁹ Probably in *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 626 where text reads *Comes Opsariou*; Haldon (1984) 176–8.

⁴⁰ Haldon (1990a) 208–20; Haldon (1995); Lilie (1995).

(*Armeniakon*) in the north-east, and the Thracian field army (*Thrakesion*) in the south-west. There was also a new command of the *Karabasianoï* on the south coast and the Aegean islands.

The system of field armies and border troops lasted for more than three centuries, from its uncertain beginnings in the third century to the transformation into the thematic system. Although there were changes in organization, the principles of mobile forces supporting troops based on the borders was not challenged by contemporaries, even after disasters like the battle of Adrianople in 378. When lost territory was reconquered, as by Justinian in Africa, the field and border troop system was restored. The changes that occurred after the reign of Maurice were reactive, and were driven by logistical rather than operational considerations.

II. REGIMENTAL STRUCTURES

All late Roman armies were made up of individual regiments that had their own histories and traditions. Some had been in existence for centuries, e.g. *legio v Macedonica* and *x Gemina*, both Republican foundations, were part of the army of the *magister militum per Orientem* c. 400 (*Not. Dign. or.* 7.39, 42). *Legio iv Parthica* was stationed in Syria at least between the compilation of the *Notitia Dignitatum* (c. 395) and 586 while the *equites Theodosiaci iuniores*, mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum* as part of the Thracian field army, were still in existence in 935.⁴¹ Although there was institutional continuity, there were also changes in the organization of existing units, destruction of old units and the creation of new ones. In all cases we are poorly informed about their internal structures. Terminology is often confusing and despite the many varieties of unit, generic terms like *numerus*, *arithmos* or *tagma* were common, the equivalent of the modern use of regiment or unit. Lastly, the discussion here focuses on establishment strengths, though as in most armies, units were under strength for much of their existence and had to be brought up to strength before campaigning.

Under the early empire legions were composed of ten similarly equipped cohorts, each about c. 500 strong (see p. 38 above). During the course of the third century this simple structure became more complex, reflecting both an increasing tactical sophistication within legions and the inflexibility of large units optimized for field battles. From as early as the first century AD legions sent detachments (*vexillationes*) to campaigning armies and in border provinces were broken up into detachments as garrisons.⁴² In the third century many of these detachments became permanently

⁴¹ *iv Parthica*, Theophyl. Sim. 2.6.9; *Not. Dign. or.* 35.24; *Theodosiaci*, Const. Porphy. 663; *Not. Dign. or.* 8.27; Haldon (1993); Kaegi (1975).

⁴² Jones (1964) 680–1; Zuckerman (1988); Brennan (1980); see pp. 70–3 above.

separated from their parent unit, so that at the end of the fourth century, *legio III Diocletiana* was part of the Thracian field army but also existed in four places in Egypt.⁴³ Also during the third century some eastern legions strengthened their combined arms capacity by creating sub-units of *lanciarrii*, missile-armed infantry, and cavalry *promoti*. Thus in Egypt in 299 *legio II Traiana* was represented by a *vexillatio*, some *lanciarrii* and some *promoti*, with a base unit elsewhere. During the first quarter of the fourth century many of these sub-units of *lanciarrii* and *promoti* were split off as independent formations.⁴⁴ But not all legions fragmented. Vegetius' statement that Diocletian's new legions of *Ioviani* and *Herculiani* were 6,000 strong is supported by an inscription from Sitifis in Mauretania which mentions cohorts VII and X of *legio II Herculia*.⁴⁵ The latest record of legionary *vexillationes* comes from 321 when detachments of *legio III Gallica* and *I Illyricorum* were attested at Syene in Egypt.⁴⁶ By the mid-fourth century field army legions had become smaller in size, c. 1,200 strong.⁴⁷

At the same time as eastern legions were developing sub-units and probably in response to the same pressures, a new type of infantry unit, the *auxilia palatina*, appeared in the western empire. Some, like the *Batavi*, *Tungri*, *Nervii* or *Mattiaci*, were older auxiliary cohorts that were transferred into the field armies and upgraded in status. Others were new creations, and a particularly large number of these were raised by Constantius I and Constantine I. At the point of recruitment many of their number were of extra-imperial origin, but subsequent recruits diluted this character. These regiments appear to have been c. 1,200 strong (though the evidence could support 600).⁴⁸ The eastern creation of *promoti* was matched by the creation of several new series of cavalry regiments, generically referred to as *Illyriciani*, and incorporating units of *Dalmatae*, *Mauri*, *Scutarii* and probably *Stablesiani*.⁴⁹ These new regiments, like the *promoti*, were known as *vexillationes* and had an establishment of c. 600.⁵⁰

The praetorians were organized into ten cohorts at Rome each 1,000 strong under an equestrian tribune and supported by the *equites singulares*, a cavalry regiment of 1,000 men (see pp. 49–50 above). With the creation of the tetrarchy, the ten cohorts of praetorians were split between all the emperors.⁵¹ Constantine disbanded Maxentius' praetorians after the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312, Licinius' (and probably his own) after

⁴³ *Not. Dign. or.* 8.37, 28.18, 31.31, 33, 38.

⁴⁴ Balty (1988) 101; Hoffmann (1969–70) 1.218–20; Brennan (1998b).

⁴⁵ Veg. *Mil.* 1.17; *ILS* 4195; Christodoulou (2002). ⁴⁶ *AE* 1900.29.

⁴⁷ Elton (1996b) 89–90; Coello (1996).

⁴⁸ Speidel (1996c); Zuckerman (1993); Hoffmann (1969–70) 1.131–72.

⁴⁹ Ritterling (1903); Speidel (1974), (1975).

⁵⁰ Elton (1996b) 89–90; Agathias 3.6.9, two *tagmata* totalling 600.

⁵¹ Zos. 2.9.1, 3; Speidel (1988).

Chrysopolis in 324.⁵² With Constantine's dissolution of the praetorians, the *scholae palatinae* took over their role as the imperial guard.⁵³ These élite cavalry regiments, 500 strong, are first mentioned during the reign of Diocletian when they supplemented the praetorians.⁵⁴ In the fourth century, the changing arrangements of emperors probably caused many transfers and reorganizations. In the 350s and 360s there were several units of *scutarii*, a unit of *armaturae* and a unit of *gentiles et scutarii*; by the end of the fourth century, the *Notitia Dignitatum* records seven eastern and five western *scholae*.⁵⁵ The corps as a whole was administered by the *magister officiorum*, though from the fifth century it had become known as the *obsequium* and came under the command of the *comes domesticorum*.⁵⁶ The close guarding of the emperor himself in the fourth century was carried out by forty *candidati*, selected from the *scholae*.⁵⁷ In the west the *scholae* were disbanded by Theoderic in 493, but in the east, the appearance of several *comites scholarum* at the battle of Cotyaeum in 492 and perhaps the tombstone at Dorylaeum of Theodulus, *comes* of the *gentiles iuniores*, suggest their participation in Anastasius' Isaurian War (491–8).⁵⁸ In the sixth century Justinian raised four additional *scholae*. At this point they were still of military use since in 559 they were used to defend the city against a surprise Hunnic attack; but their worth was lower in 626 when there was an attempt to divert their rations to regular troops during the Avar-Persian siege of Constantinople (*Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 626).

The other troops on the borders were infantry *cohorts* and cavalry *alae* (variously described as *equites*, *vexillationes* or *cunei*).⁵⁹ In the third century these units were usually c. 500 strong, occasionally 1,000. In 533 the *arithmos* of the *Numidae Justiniani* at Hermopolis in Egypt had 508 men, suggesting no change in establishments. As this unit's title suggests, new *alae* and cohorts continued to be raised throughout the period. In the west regiments served in Noricum until the 450s, and in the east we hear of *equites Illyriciani* in Palestine in the 630s.⁶⁰ There were also flotillas (*classes*), separate units based at a fort garrisoned by an infantry or cavalry unit. In 412 the ducate of Scythia boasted 125 *lusoriae* (light boats), with a further 119 *iudicariae* and *agrarienses* (categories of patrol boat) being built in the space of seven years (*Cod. Theod.* 7.17.1).

The size of fleets is hard to determine, particularly as merchant ships were requisitioned when needed. In the later fourth century the Italian and

⁵² Speidel (1994).

⁵³ Frank (1969); Jones (1970); Barlow and Brennan (2001); Lenski (2000); Haldon (1984) 119–28.

⁵⁴ *ILS* 2791; Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 19.6; Woods (1997). ⁵⁵ *Not. Dign. occ.* 9.4–8, or. 11.4–10.

⁵⁶ *Cod. Theod.* 7.1.17 (398). ⁵⁷ Frank (1969) 127–42; Haldon (1984) 129–30.

⁵⁸ Theophanes, *Chron.* 138.10, AM 5985; Drew-Bear and Eck (1976) 305–7.

⁵⁹ Van Berchem (1952); Scharf (2001).

⁶⁰ *P Lond.* 1663; Eugippius, 4.1–4, 20; *Miracula s. Anastasii Persae* 14.

Gallic fleets found it easy to transport a few thousand troops in one lift to reinforce Africa and Britain. These fleets were probably similar to the 100 transports and 100 warships which carried 8,000 men against Theoderic in Italy in 508. In civil wars or for bigger major operations, like those mounted against Africa, much larger fleets were assembled. In 324 Constantine's fleet apparently numbered over 200 warships and over 2,000 transports, while Licinius had 350 warships. Leo's 468 expedition against the Vandals was supposed to have involved 1,100 ships and Belisarius' fleet in 533 had 92 warships escorting 500 troop transports which carried a force of 16,000.⁶¹

After the changes under the tetrarchy, the next major change was the development of a new type of cavalry regiment called *foederati* in the late fourth century. These were permanently established cavalry units, with titles like *Honoriaci*. Their duties were the same as those of regular regiments, e.g. sent to reinforce Africa in the 420s or deployed to garrison Italy against the Vandals in the 440s. Since *foederati* were initially deliberately recruited from barbarians, many units had a distinct identity, like the Saracens used against the Goths in 378, the Alans in the 401–2 campaign, or the Huns led by Olympius in 409. However, this ethnic identity was the result of their recent recruitment and would have become weaker over time as casualties were replaced by men of various origins within and beyond the empire.⁶²

Roman field armies were often supplemented by allied barbarians (variously and loosely described as *foederati*, *auxilia*, *symmachoi*, *misthotoi* or *homaichmiai*).⁶³ Allies were summoned by the Romans for a single campaign and dismissed at the end of it. They were used as single units, organized and fighting in their own fashion, but supplied by the Romans.⁶⁴ Many of these forces came from the Danube. Licinius had a large number of Goths fighting for him in the 324 campaign against Constantine, Theodosius used Goths against Eugenius in 394 and Zeno sent Goths against Illus in 484.⁶⁵ In the sixth century, Hun allies were used in Lazica in 556 and in Italy, with Narses paying off Lombard allies in Italy in 552 (Agathias 3.17.5; Procop. *Wars* 8.33.2). These forces came under Roman strategic command: thus during the Frigidus campaign of 394, the Roman officers Bacurius (*magister militum?*), Gainas (*comes*) and Saul (rank unknown) commanded the allied contingents in Theodosius' army. But the actual allied contingents were led by their own leaders, so that Alaric fought at the Frigidus in 394 and in 556, a force of Hunnic Sabiri fought with the Roman army in Lazica under Iliger, Balmach and Cutilzis (Zos. 4.57.2; John of Antioch fr. 187; Agathias 3.17.5). In some cases allied leaders were given Roman positions, like Theoderic Strabo who was *magister militum*

⁶¹ 508, Marc. Com. s.a. 508; 324, Zos. 2.22.1–2; 468, Priscus fr. 53.1; Belisarius, Procop. *Wars* 3.11.1–16.

⁶² Elton (1996b) 91–4; Teall (1965). ⁶³ Elton (1996a) 570.

⁶⁴ Liebeschuetz (1986); Elton (1996b) 96–7.

⁶⁵ Zos. 4.57; Anon. *Val.* 5.27; Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.27; Heather (1991).

praesentalis in 473 or Cutzinas in north Africa in the late 540s (Malchus fr. 2; Corippus, *Iohannis* 6.247). In the east, the Romans had semi-permanent arrangements with a number of Arab dynasties (Tanukh, Salih, Ghassan, Kinda), from at least the early fourth century to the seventh century. The leaders of these groups were called *phylarchi* by the Romans.⁶⁶

The *excubitores* were founded by Leo I (457–74) as an imperial bodyguard unit 300 strong. The unit was commanded by the *comes excubitorum* who reported directly to the emperor. They fought during Anastasius' Isaurian war and were still an active regiment in 610.⁶⁷ Many generals had their own bodyguards, often of a few hundred cavalry. In the fifth and sixth centuries these were usually known as *bucellarii* (though other terms like *domestici*, *hypaspistai* or *doryphoroi* were used).⁶⁸ But on some occasions the numbers could be quite large, though Procopius' report that Belisarius equipped 7,000 mounted bodyguards from his own resources is probably an exaggeration. These men were not confined to bodyguard duties, and Belisarius sent 300 of his as an advance guard on the march to Carthage. Many later became officers (Procop. *Wars* 7.1.20; cf. 3.17.1).

In the sixth century field army troops (by now known as *katalogoi* rather than *comitatenses*) were supplemented by new infantry regiments with regional names, e.g. Isaurians, Thracians, Tzannici and Armenians.⁶⁹ This is a description of a Roman army in Lazica in 555:

In front, Justin the son of Germanus and the crowd around him were drawn up on the highest point facing the sea, with Martinus the general [*strategos*] and the forces of Martinus stood on a nearby place. In the centre, Angilas had the Moorish peltasts and spearmen, Theodore the Tzannic hoplites and Philomathius the Isaurian slingers and javelin-men. At some distance from these were placed a detachment of Langobards and Heruls; Gibrus led them both. All the rest of the wall which ended at the eastern part of the town was guarded by eastern regiments [*tagmata*] being drawn up by Valerian the general [*strategos*]. . .

(Agathias 3.20.9–10)

These new infantry units were several thousand strong, i.e. larger than fourth- and fifth-century regiments, and had multiple officers. In the sixth century there was a tendency to create operational units larger than individual regiments, as shown by the brigading of various cavalry forces and the new larger infantry regiments. These larger infantry regiments may have been brigades (*moirai*) rather than regiments (*tagmata*). The regiment of Isaurians that fought under Belisarius at Callinicum in 531 was probably the same unit (3,000 strong) sent to Italy in 535 under the command of the

⁶⁶ Whittow (1999); Shahid (1995); Isaac (1990); Mayerson (1991); Graf (1979).

⁶⁷ Whitby (1987); Haldon (1984) 136–9.

⁶⁸ Diesener (1972); Liebeschuetz (1990) 43–7; Whittaker (1993).

⁶⁹ Phasians, *Suda* φ 122; Armenians, *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 626 (p. 724); Tzanni, Agathias 2.20.7–8.

Isaurian Ennes. It was reinforced in 537 by 3,000 Isaurians under Paulus and Conon before being split into two parts in 538 during operations in northern Italy (Procop. *Wars* 1.18.5–7, 5.5.2–3, 6.5.1). New cavalry regiments continued to be formed, like the *Numidae Justiniani*, the *Justiniani Persae* and *Justiniani Vandali*. During the sixth century the term *bandon* began to be used. Since Maurice describes *banda* as being from 200 to 400 strong, commanded by a *comes* or tribune, the term was probably an alternative to *tagmata*. They may, however, have been subdivisions of existing regiments, as suggested by an inscription from Yalova in Turkey mentioning the second *bandon* of the *Constantiniaci* in 531.⁷⁰

As in the late fourth and fifth centuries the *katalogoi* were supported by cavalry regiments of *foederati*. By the early sixth century the *foederati* had become administratively separate from the *katalogoi*, a result of creating a corps of *foederati* regiments under a *comes foederatorum*.⁷¹ *Foederati* operated in most major campaigns in the sixth century. In 538 three Herul officers led 2,000 men into Italy. This force returned to Constantinople in 539, but returned to Italy in 545 where they fought continually until 554. There were several units of Heruls, since the force led by Sindual in Italy in 554 was not the same as that led by Uligagus in Lazica in 555.⁷² These *foederati* regiments were supplemented by the creation of two similar groups of cavalry, the *bucellarii* and *optimates*, in the late sixth century, probably in the reign of Tiberius. The *bucellarii* were formed of two *tagmata*. The *optimates*, many of whom were Goths, contained several *tagmata*. Both of these formations were attached to the eastern praesental army.⁷³

Although individual regiments were independent manoeuvre and organizational units, they were often brigaded into higher formations. The terminology for these brigades and their commanders changed frequently. In the third century, legionary *vexillationes* were combined in pairs (or sometimes more than two units) under a *dux* or *praepositus* (or on occasion a centurion). Thus the *praepositus* Victorinus commanded a *vexillatio* drawn from *legio III Gallica* and *I Illyricorum* at Coptus in Egypt in 316.⁷⁴ From the early fourth century to the early sixth century brigades were under a *comes rei militaris*, as when Libino led the Celtae and Petulantes against some Alamanni in 360 (Amm. Marc. 21.3.2). During the mid-sixth century brigades were commanded by a *taxiarchos*. By the end of the sixth century brigades were known as *moirai* and commanded by a *chiliarchos*,

⁷⁰ Zuckerman (1995) 233–5 = AE 1995.1427; Maurice, *Strat.* 1.4; *Miracula s. Anastasii Persae* 26.

⁷¹ Malalas 14.23 Thurn = 364.12–13 Dindorf (AD 422), perhaps an anachronism; Procop. *Wars* 7.31.10 (AD 548) for the first conclusive attestation; Maurice, *Strat.* 2.6.20, 3.8.3; Theophanes, *Chron.* 251.27 (AM 6074); Haldon (1984) 246–8.

⁷² Procop. *Wars* 6.13.18, 6.22.8, 7.13.22; Agathias 2.20.8, 3.6.5.

⁷³ Haldon (1984) 96–102; John of Antioch fr. 218f5; Maurice, *Strat.* 1.4.

⁷⁴ *Dux*, AE 1934.193; *praepositus*, ILS 8882.

dux or *moirarchos*, though the brigade officer of the élite *optimates* was still a *taxiarchos* (Maurice, *Strat.* 1.3, 1.4).

There were no fixed formations above brigade level. Although armies were usually divided into a centre and two wings (sometimes called *meroi*) for battle, these were battlefield arrangements rather than permanent organizational structures. Regiments and brigades were not permanently attached to armies, but were often transferred between them. Several cavalry regiments had originally been stationed in the west, e.g. the *Cataphractarii Biturigenses*, named after Bourges in Gaul, by the late fourth century had been transferred to eastern armies. The same processes also occurred in reverse, with the *equites scutarii Aureliaci* found first in Syria then later in Britain.⁷⁵ These transfers were usually to reinforce existing armies, as in 360 when Constantius II demanded the brigades of *Heruli-Batavi* and *Celtae-Petulantes* from Julian for his Persian campaign (Amm. Marc. 20.4.2). But they could also be used to create expeditionary forces, as in 431 in Africa when Aspar led a combined force of his own eastern and Bonifatius' western troops and probably when Anthemius came to the west in 468.⁷⁶ Similar transfers occurred over shorter distances and in the fifth century, Zeno assembled reinforced troops in the Balkans with units 'from Asia and the East' (Malchus fr. 18.1).

Late Roman unit structures are complicated, though this should not be surprising given the size of the army and the time period under examination. Further research will probably modify some of the conclusions presented here.

1. Troop types and numbers

The army was the largest and most expensive part of the Roman state, but attempting to estimate just how big and how expensive it was is very difficult.⁷⁷ During the late Empire there is only one figure for the whole military establishment, that of John Lydus who, writing under Justinian, stated that Diocletian had an army of 389,704 and a navy of 45,562. This figure may be accurate, since John worked in the office of the praetorian prefect and could have had access to official records. His near contemporary Agathias stated that there were 'now' 150,000 men to defend the whole empire, whereas 'previously' there were 645,000. Agathias was hostile towards Justinian, so both figures may be exaggerated to show how the emperor had diminished imperial resources. Other evidence is even less reliable, e.g. Lactantius' suggestion that Diocletian quadrupled the number of troops by creating new armies for each of the tetrarchs.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Not. Dign. or.* 5.34; Speidel (1977). ⁷⁶ Elton (1996b) 212.

⁷⁷ Treadgold (1995) 43–64; cf. pp. 173–6 above.

⁷⁸ John Lydus, *Mens.* 1.27; Agathias 5.13.7–8; Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 7.2.

Because of the lack of reliable numbers provided by the sources, many historians have used the lists of units in the *Notitia Dignitatum* and estimates of unit sizes to calculate the size of the army. A. H. M. Jones thus estimated overall army size at the end of the fourth century as c. 600,000.⁷⁹ However, other historians have difficulties in relating the smaller sizes of attested forces to such a large total. Duncan-Jones has argued against Jones's suggested unit sizes, though his arguments have been criticized by Coello and Zuckerman. Although fourth-century legions were smaller (about 1,000 as opposed to 5,000 men), there were far more of them than in the second century (forty-eight border and ninety-six field in the late fourth century as opposed to thirty or so under the early Empire), resulting in similar numbers of men. There were perhaps twice as many non-legionary units in the late fourth century as in the second century, of approximately the same size, as suggested by the *Numidae Justiniani* who were still over 500 strong in the sixth century. Duncan-Jones, however, has argued that non-legionary units were much smaller. These arguments are derived from receipts for supplies and donatives, which show that, e.g. the *ala 1 Hiberorum* at Thmou was 116 strong in 298 and 118 strong in 300. However, there were many more bases than units and outpostings to several locations was common. With this in mind, and since these receipts cannot be shown to have been for whole units, they do not provide conclusive evidence for smaller unit sizes.⁸⁰ Although the evidence is weak, there seems to be no reason to doubt that in the fourth century the late Roman army was approximately half a million strong, little different from the establishment of the early imperial army. By the sixth century numbers were smaller, partly because of the contraction of the empire, but 300,000 seems a reasonable estimate for a reduced empire.

The number of men under arms always differed from the size of expeditions. When on campaign most regional field armies fielded some 10,000 to 20,000 troops. In 357 the Gallic field army under Julian at Strasbourg had approximately 10,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry (Amm. Marc. 16.12.2). The eastern army in 531 had 20,000 men while the army of Armenia had 15,000 in 530 (Procop. *Wars* 1.15.11, 1.18.5). These figures are close to the establishments for regional field armies calculated by Jones from the *Notitia Dignitatum*. He estimated strengths for the Gallic army as 34,000; western Illyricum, 13,500; Thrace, 24,500; Illyricum, 17,500 and for the eastern field army 20,000.⁸¹ These figures are similar to the recommendation in Maurice's *Strategicon* of an ideal army as 24,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry (*Strat.* 12.B.8).

⁷⁹ Jones (1964) 682–6, 1434, 1449–50.

⁸⁰ Duncan-Jones (1990 [1978]), 105–17, 214–21; Coello (1996) 37–42; Zuckerman (1988).

⁸¹ Jones (1964) 1434.

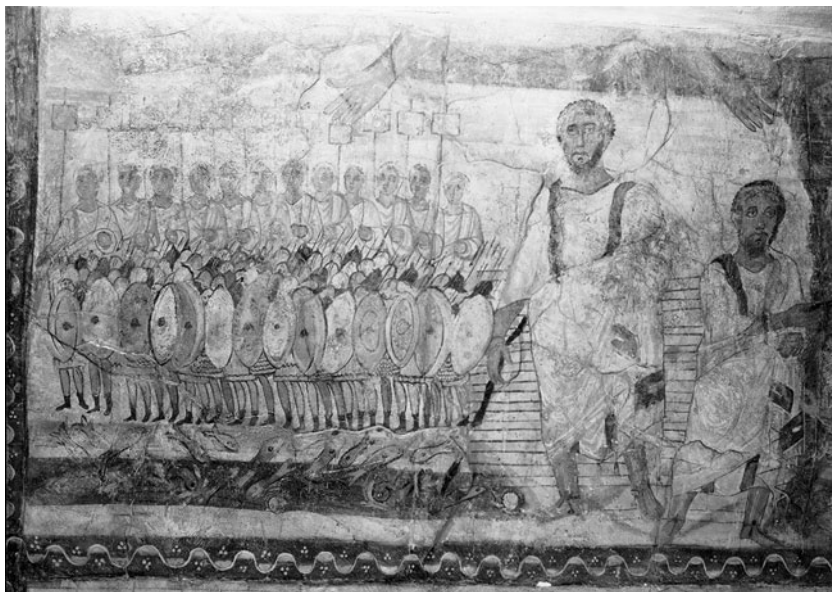


Figure 8.1 Armoured infantry, mid-third century, from the fresco of the crossing of the Red Sea in the synagogue at Dura-Europus.

Larger armies were created by reinforcing regional field armies with the praesental armies. In 363 Julian combined the eastern and western praesental armies with the eastern field army and some eastern border troops to create a force of 83,000.⁸² For a planned campaign against the Goths in 478, 12,000 men under the *magister militum per Thracias* were to be supplemented by 26,000 from the eastern praesental army. Joshua the Stylite mentions 52,000 men from the eastern armies and the two praesental armies in 502. In the Balkans early sixth-century armies of 60,000 or 65,000 men were presumably formed by combining the praesental, Thracian and Illyrian armies.⁸³ For comparison, Jones's estimates from the *Notitia Dignitatum* were 28,500 for the western praesental army and 42,000 for the eastern.⁸⁴

2. Equipment

Between the third and seventh centuries there was little development in equipment and most Roman troops were armed with a spear, sword, shield, helmet and metal body armour (fig. 8.1). Light troops on horse or foot carried less defensive equipment, while some heavy cavalry wore more.⁸⁴

⁸² Zos. 3.12.5–13. 1 (the text is ambiguous and could also be interpreted as 65,000).

⁸³ Malchus fr. 18. 2; Ps.-Joshua Stylites 54; Marc. Com. s.a. 514; Victor Tonnensis s.a. 511.

⁸⁴ Kolias (1988); Haldon (1975); James (1986); Bishop and Coulston (1993) 122–82.



Figure 8.2 Remains of a skeleton and the armour of an infantryman, mid-third century from a collapsed mine in Dura-Europus.

The most common type of armour was mail, usually in the form of a corselet covering the body to below the waist or (less often) as a hauberk extending below the knees with a coif protecting the head (fig. 8.2). Other types of armour included corselets of scale or *lamellae* (horn plates) and iron or bronze cuirasses. Although Vegetius stated that infantry stopped wearing armour from the reign of Gratian (375–83), he probably misinterpreted an event in the Gothic wars of the 370s when, according to another writer, the general Modares ‘ordered his men, armed only with swords and shields and disdaining heavier armour, to abandon the usual fighting in close order’.⁸⁵ Most troops carried large oval shields, about 1–1.2 metres high,

⁸⁵ Veg. *Mil.* 1.20; Zos. 4.25.2; Coulston (1990).



Figure 8.3 Relief from the arch of Constantine, Rome, depicting infantry on the march, c. AD 312–15.

and 0.8 metres wide (fig. 8.3). Infantry greaves were not common and may have been confined to front ranks. The most heavily protected troops were the cataphracts (also known as *clibanarii*) whose body armour was either a cuirass or mail, with facemasks on their helmets and segmented plate armour on their arms and legs. Some may also have carried shields and ridden horses protected with scale, mail, leather or felt barding.

The standard hand-to-hand weapon for infantry and shock cavalry was a spear about 2–2.5 metres in length (fig. 8.4). As a secondary weapon many troops carried a straight two-edged sword about 0.7–0.9 metres long known as a *spatha*, which could thrust and cut (fig. 8.5). Occasionally other weapons such as axes, maces and lassoes were used (figs. 8.6, 8.7). Archers were armed with composite bows, infantry bows being larger than the compact reflex bows used by cavalry (fig. 8.8). Cross-bows (*manuballistae*), slings (*fundi*) and staff slings (*fustibuli*) were rare. An assortment of shorter-range throwing weapons was carried (often in multiples) by both infantry and cavalry, including short light darts (*mattiobarbuli* or *plumbatae*) and javelins of various types (fig. 8.9).

Soldiers also carried other equipment besides weapons, armour and uniform (boots, woollen tunic, belt, military cloak (*chlamys*) and trousers). These items included a waterbottle, mess kit, blanket, at least three days' rations, spare clothing and personal effects to make a basic fighting load of



Figure 8.4 Mosaic of hunters from Piazza Armerina, Sicily, showing the probable appearance of infantry, early fourth century.

25–30 kg. On occasion a pick-axe, tent quarter and stake may have been carried, though these would usually have been transported by the squad mule (fig. 8.10).⁸⁶ The will of Valerius Aion, centurion of the *equites promoti* of *legio II Traiana* in Egypt in 320, gives a partial list of equipment

⁸⁶ Elton (1996b) 115–16.

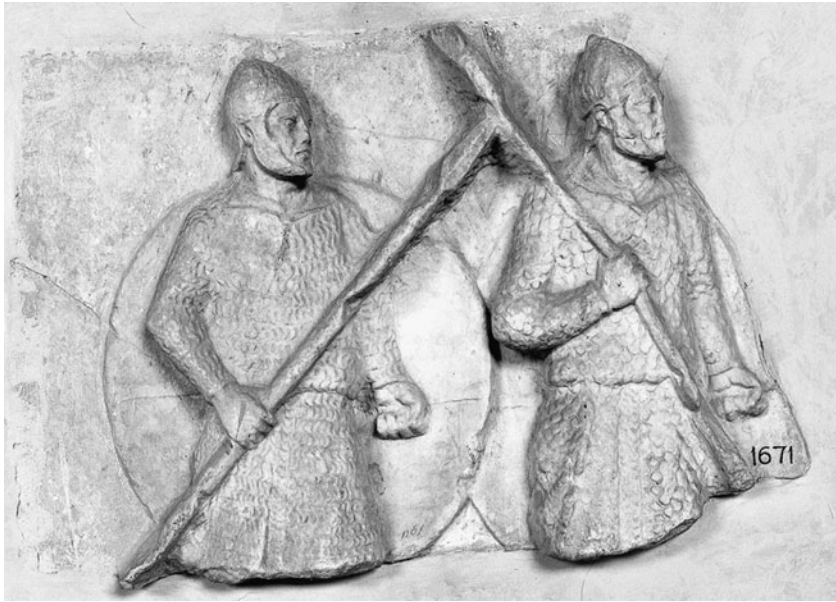


Figure 8.5 Late antique relief depicting armoured infantry.

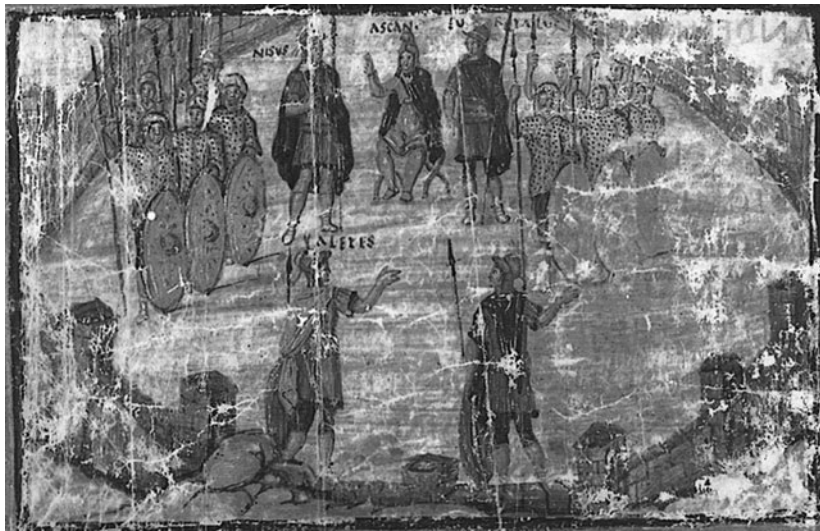


Figure 8.6 Armoured infantrymen in the *Virgilius Vaticanus* MS, early fifth century.



Figure 8.7 Battle scene, mid-fifth century, from a mosaic depicting the flight of the Amorites.

which soldiers might have carried with them. Besides a shield and lance (fig. 8.11) a soldier was expected to have an *alabandicum* (probably a type of tunic), two hatchets, a cloak, two haircloth sacks, a haircloth *thallium* (?), two saddlebags (one leather, one haircloth), a belt, a bronze table and a bronze measuring cup.⁸⁷

There were several types of cavalry and infantry units and the precise balance in armies and on expeditions would have depended on the forces available, local terrain and the enemy faced. Although from the third century cavalry began to play a larger role within the army, both tactically

⁸⁷ *P Col.* 7.188; Woods (1998).



Figure 8.8 Armoured infantrymen in the *Virgilius Romanus* MS, late fifth century.



Figure 8.9 Battle scene showing armoured infantry in a MS of Homer's *Iliad*, c. AD 500.



Figure 8.10 Infantry, late sixth century, from the relief depicting the meeting of Joseph and Jacob at Goshen, from the throne of Maximian in Ravenna.

and numerically infantry forces were always at the army's core. The *Notitia Dignitatum* suggests that the late fourth-century army as a whole had approximately twice as many infantry units as cavalry. Since cavalry regiments were smaller than infantry regiments, this shows the numerical domination by infantry. Recorded numbers for expeditions also support the numerical dominance of infantry. Julian at Strasbourg in 357 led approximately 10,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry (Amm. Marc. 16.12.2), similar proportions to a Balkan force in 478 of 8,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry (Malchus fr. 18.2). Some sixth-century armies had a few more cavalry. Belisarius invaded Africa in 533 with 10,000 foot and 6,000 horse, although Narses' army at Busta Gallorum in Italy in 552 contained some 8,000 infantry and 1,500 cavalry (Procop. *Wars* 3.11.2; 8.31.1–7). Both the lists in the *Notitia Dignitatum* and recorded figures match the recommendations of military writers. The infantry appendix of the *Strategicon* recommended an ideal army as 24,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry. The *Strategicon's* chapter on mixed formations of cavalry and infantry suggested that a convenient proportion of such forces was one-third cavalry, two-thirds infantry and 'even if the cavalry forms only a fourth, the army will not be unbalanced'. These are figures for large armies and smaller forces might be made up differently. In difficult terrain infantry might be preferred, while raiding and scouting forces could be entirely cavalry (*Strat.* 2.4, 12.B.8, 12.A.7).



Figure 8.11 Armoured and unarmoured infantry, early seventh century, from a silver plate depicting the battle between David and Goliath.

In the early empire most infantry regiments fought in close order in the main line of battle, supported by separate units of archers (*sagittarii*). By the third century legions had begun to develop specialist sub-units like *lanciararii*, archers and artillery (*ballistarii*). Front-rank men were generally given better equipment and more armour. There were also specialist units of artillery, archers and other missile units. Most cavalry units were multi-purpose, able to fight hand to hand or at a distance. These units were supplemented by cataphracts and *clibanarii*, more heavily armoured shock cavalry (fig. 8.12), which were concentrated in the eastern armies.⁸⁸ There were also large numbers of light cavalry and mounted archers, best suited for skirmishing. As with infantry, cavalry front ranks were better protected (fig. 8.13) and in some units were known as *cataphractarii* (fig. 8.14).⁸⁹ From

⁸⁸ Speidel (1984a).

⁸⁹ Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 17; Maurice, *Strat.* 1.2; Rea (1984); Speidel (1984a); Coulston (1986).

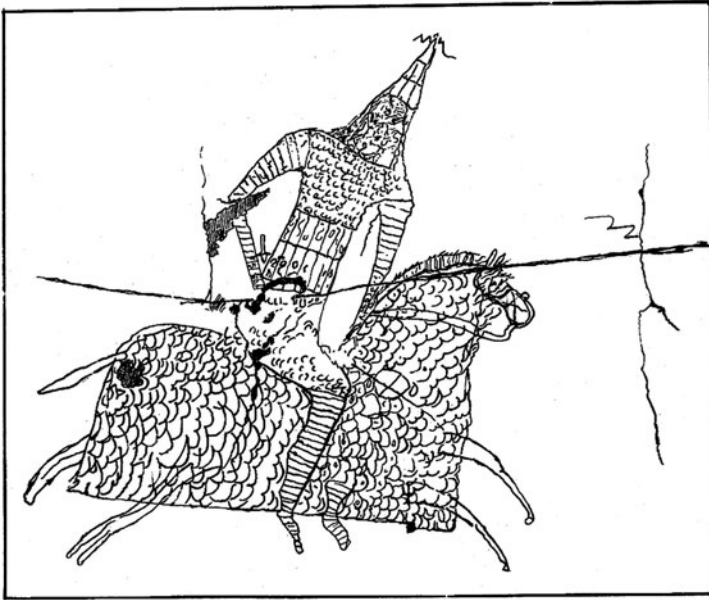


Figure 8.12 Graffito of a charging *clibanarius* from Dura-Europus, mid-third century.

the sixth century many cavalry units were armed with both bows and lances (fig. 8.15), though it is clear that not every trooper was able to shoot. Maurice noted that ‘all the younger Romans up to the age of forty must definitely be required to possess bow and quiver, whether they be expert archers or just average’.⁹⁰

Fleets consisted of two types of ships, warships and transports. Warships were oared galleys (sometimes described as triremes or *dromones*) with sails, rams and sometimes bolt-shooting artillery. Transports had sails only and would be almost defenceless if attacked. Both cavalry and infantry were transported, the mounts for the cavalry being carried in special ships.⁹¹ The border troops usually used smaller vessels, though some could be equipped with bolt-shooters. Julian sent 300 men across the Rhine in 359 in forty boats. These were probably similar to the fourth-century longboats found at Mainz (about 10 metres long and 4 metres wide with a shallow draught).⁹²

⁹⁰ Maurice, *Strat.* 2.8; cf. p. 368 below.

⁹¹ Elton (1996b) 98–9, 100; MacGeorge (2002) 306–11.

⁹² Amm. Marc. 18.2.11–12; Höckmann (1982); Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.21.



Figure 8.13 Cataphract horse armour from Dura-Europus, mid-third century.

III. INDIVIDUAL CAREER STRUCTURES

It is sometimes argued that the late Roman army suffered from severe shortages of manpower and was thus forced to rely on non-Roman manpower. The manpower shortage was a view particularly expressed by Boak, though heavily criticized by Finley since it is based mostly on legal evidence that shows that there were problems involved in recruiting in the fourth century. However, problems in keeping armies up to strength were not confined to



Figure 8.14 Relief from the arch of Galerius in Thessalonica depicting cataphracts, late third century.

the late Roman period, nor does concern for recruiting prove a shortage of troops.⁹³ Much of the evidence for recruiting problems is concerned with excluding certain groups, e.g. slaves, heretics and *curiales*, though no distinction was made between citizens and non-citizens. Besides legislation there is little other evidence for shortage of troops, though at times there were difficulties in paying for them.

Soldiers were either conscripts or volunteers, but it is not possible to assess the relative importance of the two.⁹⁴ A major source of conscripts was sons of soldiers since military service was theoretically hereditary. How rigorously this was enforced is unknown, though the government was concerned that defaulters be made to serve.⁹⁵ St Martin, whose father was a soldier, tried to avoid service, but eventually served as a *scholarius* for five years during Constantius II's reign. But by the mid-fifth century practices seemed more relaxed and neither Marcian nor Saba was forced to join his father's regiment, suggesting that enough troops were available. Sons of soldiers

⁹³ Boak (1955); Finley (1958).

⁹⁴ Haldon (1989); Whitby (1995); Brennan (1998b); Martin, Sulpicius Severus, *Vit. Mart.* 2.1–6.

⁹⁵ Elton (1996b) 129; *Cod. Theod.* 7.22. 1 (313(S)).



Figure 8.15 Unarmoured cavalryman, fifth–seventh century, from a fresco depicting St Sisinnius spearing a female demon, in the monastery of St Apollo, Bawit, Egypt.

were a particularly important source of troops in the less mobile border troops. In sixth-century Egypt military service was popular enough for there to be a waiting period before being able to join a regiment.⁹⁶

Other conscripts came from annual levies of both free Romans and barbarians (*laeti*, *gentiles*, *dediticii* or *tributarii*) settled within the empire.⁹⁷ A 409 law for the settlement of some prisoners from the Danubian tribe of Sciri declares that they should not be required to provide recruits for the army for twenty years (*Cod. Theod.* 5.6.3). The reason for this restriction was ‘because of a shortage of farm produce’ and suggests that most settlers would be subject to conscription immediately. A panegyric description of a settlement of Franks made by Constantius I in Gaul boasted that ‘the barbarian farmer pays taxes. What is more, if he is called for military service, he hurries up, is improved by the discipline and is proud to serve under the

⁹⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Vit. Mart.* 2; Barnes (1996); Cyr., *Scyth. Vita Sabae* 9; Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.1; Keenan (1990).

⁹⁷ Elton (1996b) 129–33; Whittaker (1982); Zuckerman (1998).

name of soldier' (*Pan. Lat.* 4(8).21). Of course, not all men were as willing to be conscripted as these Franks were supposed to be. A letter to Abinnaeus pleaded for the release from service of a nephew. 'He is a soldier's son and he has been enrolled to go for a soldier. If you can release him again, it is a fine thing to do . . . but if he must serve, please safeguard him from going abroad with the draft for the field army' (*P Abinn.* 19). A few were so desperate to avoid service that they mutilated themselves (a problem which also occurred in the first century AD: Suet. *Aug.* 24), though Valentinian I, a notoriously fierce man when it came to the law, ordered that such men be executed by burning (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.5).

Another source of conscripts was defeated enemies. In some cases, the Romans negotiated recruits (*tributarii* or *dediticii*) from a defeated enemy as part of the peace treaty.⁹⁸ Prisoners could also be drafted directly into the army, sometimes in large numbers. After Stilicho defeated Radagaisus in 406 he took 12,000 barbarians into service (*Olymp.* fr. 9). In Justinian's reign several regiments were formed from defeated prisoners, e.g. the five regiments of *Justiniani Vandali* who were sent to the eastern army after the reconquest of Africa (*Procop. Wars* 4.14.17). Individual prisoners were also recruited, like Vodomarius, a king of the Alamanni, who was kidnapped in Gaul during the reign of Constantius II but later served as *dux Phoenices* in the early 360s.⁹⁹

The conscripts were supplemented by volunteers from within and beyond the empire. Their motivations varied, some wanting adventure, others regular pay or food. The future emperor Justin I and his friends Zemarchus and Ditubistus from Dacia Mediterranea joined the recently formed *excubitores* in the reign of Leo 'in an effort to better their condition'. Many non-Roman volunteers were exiles or defectors, like Sarus, a Gothic aristocrat who entered Roman service in the early fifth century because of his hostility to other Goths, Pusaëus, a Persian officer who surrendered to Julian in 363 and who was later promoted to *dux*, or Aratius, who deserted the Persians in 530 and served in Italy in 538.¹⁰⁰ Some volunteers had contracts to limit their area of service; in a fourth-century case men from across the Rhine limited themselves to the area north of the Alps (*Amm. Marc.* 20.4.4).

At different periods certain areas of the Roman world had reputations for contributing large numbers of troops, whether as volunteers or conscripts. In the third century many successful officers came from the Danubian provinces. In the fourth century Gauls, Illyrians and Germans from across the Rhine had favourable reputations. From the 460s in the eastern empire Isaurians were prominent, while large numbers of Goths served

⁹⁸ Elton (1996b) 135. ⁹⁹ Hoffmann (1981).

¹⁰⁰ Procop. *Secret History* 6.2; *Olymp.* fr. 3; *Amm. Marc.* 24.1.9; *Procop. Wars* 6.13.17.

throughout the fifth century in both east and west. In the sixth century Armenians were used in large numbers. Moors and Persians were found in the army in small numbers through the period. This regional origin was often exploited to create a strong *esprit de corps*, especially in the sixth century. Officers were often of the same origin as their men, so Franks led Franks, Tzanni led Tzanni and Thracians led Thracians, though in such cases the units were usually deployed away from their area of origin. Thus the Isaurian regiment deployed in Italy in the 530s was commanded by the Isaurian Ennes and the Tzannici in Lazica in 554 by the Tzannian Theodorus (Agathias 2.20.7–8).

As in all armies recruiting campaigns occurred before major campaign, intended to bring units up to strength. Before Constantine invaded Italy in 312, he was involved in ‘levying troops from the barbarians he had conquered and the Germans and the other Gauls, together with those collected from Britain’. In extreme situations like Radagaisus’ invasion of Italy in 405 slaves were offered freedom if they volunteered for military service.¹⁰¹ Tiberius recruited new contingents aggressively, some of whom were named *Tiberiani* after himself, for his Persian war of 575 (Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.14; Theophanes, *Chron.* 6074).

The number of soldiers recruited from outside the empire is unknown, although substantial, a process often described as ‘barbarization’.¹⁰² The causes for this were complex, and not dependent on any shortage of manpower alone; use of troops recruited outside the empire had also occurred often during the early Empire. The extent of non-Roman recruiting is often exaggerated and the majority of regular Roman regiments continued to be composed mostly of non-barbarians. Much of the evidence for non-Roman recruits comes from names, many of which were not of a traditional Roman form. The Roman Empire was a highly cosmopolitan society, used to different accents, regional customs and naming practices. Moreover, names alone are not reliable indicators of ethnicity, since soldiers with names like Mascezael, Dagalaiphus, Ardaburius and Chilbudius were all second-generation Romans. Some non-Romans did change their names, but the extent of this practice is unknown. The large numbers who did not change their names suggest that pressure to change names was not in fact severe. And even if a soldier might think that he was of non-Roman origin, others might disagree. When Silvanus, whose father was a Frank who had served under Constantine, was suspected of plotting treason by Constantius II he contemplated flight to his father’s people. He was persuaded against this by another Frankish soldier, who suggested that he would probably be killed

¹⁰¹ Zos. 2.1.1; Haldon (1989) 20–8; Whitby (1988) III, 147; *Cod. Theod.* 7.13.16 (406).

¹⁰² E.g. Liebeschuetz (1990) 52–3.

or sold back to the Romans (Amm. Marc. 15.5.15–16). Silvanus would thus be seen as a Frank by some Romans but as a Roman by some Franks.

A crude estimate, based solely on names, suggests that in field armies one soldier in four was of non-imperial origin, a proportion that seems not to have varied over late antiquity. Among the border troops almost all recruits had Roman names. This does contrast with older views, which suggested the domination of the army by non-Romans.¹⁰³ Any non-Roman troops, however, were not distributed evenly within the army. When initially recruited, many units had a distinct ethnic character, particularly *foederati* and *auxilia palatina* regiments. When Constantine I raised several new *auxilia palatina* regiments for the campaign against Maxentius, most of the troops were Gauls and Germans from the Rhineland. But a generation later, as the *auxilium palatinum* of the Victores tunnelled into the Persian fort of Maiozamalcha in 363, the first men out of the tunnel were Exsuperius and Magnus, probably from within rather than beyond the empire (Amm. Marc. 24.4.23). Some modern scholars have suggested that the *auxilia palatina* and *scholae* regiments were composed mostly of barbarians, though such arguments depend heavily on Synesius and other writers who were objecting to change and engaging in political posturing rather than in serious debate about military effectiveness.¹⁰⁴ So, though many *scholares* were from northern Europe, many were not. Franks were particularly numerous in the *scholae* in the fourth-century west but later in the east Isaurians dominated.¹⁰⁵

Once recruited many soldiers had long careers. In the mid-fourth century Flavius Memorius spent twenty-eight years in the *Ioviani* as well as fourteen years in other positions for a total of forty-two years of service. Even in the seventh century Heraclius in 627 was able to talk to a few men serving who had mutinied against Maurice in 602.¹⁰⁶ To receive a full discharge bonus, twenty years of field army service or twenty-four years of service in the border troops was required; many men must have qualified for this. Careers followed a graded system from recruit (*tiro*) to soldier (*miles* or *eques*) and beyond. The official terminology was in Latin, though Greek terms often appear in our sources. The units in existence in the mid-third century, legions (and their detachments), *alae* and cohorts, maintained their rank structures into the seventh century (though internal organization may have changed) (see chapter 2 in this volume). The legionary garrison at Syene in the late sixth century thus incorporated several centurions like Flavius Cyrus.¹⁰⁷ The new field army units of the late third and early fourth century,

¹⁰³ Elton (1996b) 136–54; Nicasie (1998) 97–107; Frank (1969) 59, 62–72; MacMullen (1988) 201; Waas (1965) 11; Hoffmann (1969–70) 1.299–300; Barlow and Brennan (2001).

¹⁰⁴ Hoffmann (1969–70) 1.137–41; Cameron and Long (1993) 301–36.

¹⁰⁵ Barlow (1996); Agathias 5.15. ¹⁰⁶ *ILS* 2788; Theophyl. Sim. 8.12.12.

¹⁰⁷ *P Lond.* 1729.48; Keenan (1990); see pp. 71–5 above.



Figure 8.16 Porphyry statue of tetrarchs, depicting the probable appearance of senior officers, c. AD 300.

the *scholae*, *auxilia palatina* and cavalry *vexillationes* (except those like the *equites promoti* derived from legions), had a new rank series above *miles* or *eques*. The next rank was *semisalis*, *biarchus*, *circitor*, and *centenarius*. Above *centenarius* were a series of junior officer ranks, *ducenarius*, *senator* and *primicerius*. There was also a rank of *exarch* found only in cavalry units.¹⁰⁸

Officer ranks were more complicated as they changed over time and there were numerous exceptions. Here a functional distinction is made into four

¹⁰⁸ Jones (1964) 1263 n. 57.



Figure 8.17 Missorium of Theodosius I depicting emperor and guards.

groups, unit commanders border troop commanders, field troop commanders and army commanders. In theory, appointment and promotion were based on seniority and ability, but in practice were affected by other factors. When Abinnaeus arrived at Alexandria to have his appointment as *praefectus* of the *ala quinta praelectorum* confirmed c. 340 he discovered that other officers claimed the same post. It took an appeal to the emperor to have his position confirmed. Despite this, he was dismissed in 344, but appealed to the emperor again and was back in command of his regiment until at least 351.¹⁰⁹ Proximity to the emperor made rapid promotion easy (figs. 8.16–8.18). Guard officers were often selected as imperial candidates. Jovian was *primicerius domesticorum* in 363 before his elevation, Justin I was *comes excubitorum* in 518 and Tiberius was *comes excubitorum* in 574

¹⁰⁹ *P Abinn.* 1; Barnes (1985a).



Figure 8.18 Consular diptych of Stilicho showing the probable appearance of an officer c. AD 400.

before being made Caesar.¹¹⁰ Successful relatives also helped careers. Silvanus, son of one of Constantine I's generals, Bonitus, was tribune of a regiment of *scholae* in 351. In the fifth century Aspar was son of a *magister militum*, Ardabur, and father of another *magister militum*, Ardabur. In the sixth century the nephews of Solomon, the praetorian prefect of Africa, were made *duces* of Tripolitania and Pentapolis. The most useful relative, of course, was the emperor. Thus Basiliscus, Leo's brother-in-law, maintained his position as *magister militum* despite having a reputation for being easily taken in and his disastrous performance in the Vandal campaign of 468. In the early sixth century Anastasius' nephew Hypatius was *magister militum praesentalis*, while at the end of the century, Maurice's brother Petrus and brother-in-law Philippicus had long careers.

¹¹⁰ Lenski (2000); Woods (1995b).

At the start of the third century most unit commanders were aristocrats, not professional soldiers, and military posts were only part of a political career. Legions were commanded by senatorial legates (except in Egypt where they were under equestrian prefects), *alae* and most cohorts by equestrian prefects, a few cohorts by equestrian tribunes. Private soldiers could progress as far as centurion, and in a few exceptional situations could command cohorts and even be promoted to equestrian dignity. Appointments were made by imperial bureaucrats, though the emperor was ultimately responsible for approving promotions. However, during the third century many senatorial families ceased to compete for or hold military positions and from at least the reign of Gallienus, legions began to be commanded by equestrian prefects and legionary legates disappeared (though there was no ban on senatorial officers).¹¹¹ At the same time many equestrian families continued to hold military positions, but far fewer civil posts. There thus evolved separate civil and military hierarchies within the imperial administration, by accident rather than by design. The evolution of a separate military hierarchy thus led to the development of a professional officer class. By the second half of the third century this allowed men of low social origin to progress further than they could under the early Empire. Diocletian, born, at best, son of a freedman, and Galerius, who had been a herdsman, benefited from these changes, eventually becoming emperors. Less spectacular was the contemporary career of Valerius Thimpuus, who served in *legio XI Claudia*, then as a *lanciaris* in the *comitatenses* before becoming a *protector* and going on to command *legio II Herculia* (ILS 2781). Other officers of extra-imperial origin also did well. Gainas, a Goth from the Black Sea region, advanced from *miles* to *comes rei militaris* by 394, and by 399 was *magister militum praesentalis* in Constantinople.

Many of those promoted to unit commands during the third century held the office of *protector Augusti*. This could either be held on its own or at the same time as commanding units. Thus under Gallienus P. Aelius Aelianus served as prefect of *legio II Adiutrix* and *protector Augusti*.¹¹² Some of these men were part of guard units, e.g. Mucianus, *centurio protector* in the praetorians or Licinianus, *protector* of the *schola senior peditum*.¹¹³ Many *protectores* were promoted directly from the ranks after long service, like Abinnaeus who served for thirty-three years in the *Parthosagittarii*. Others were invited to apply by the emperor, e.g. Leontius, inducted by Julian, while sons of senior officers and barbarian royalty were often appointed directly (Julian, *Ep.* 152). In the fourth century, *protectores* had come to act as staff officers and were organized into *scholae* of *domestici peditum* and *equitum* under the command of the *comes domesticorum*. These men were technically *protectores domestici*, distinguishing them from the *protectores*

¹¹¹ AE 1965.9. ¹¹² AE 1965.9. ¹¹³ ILS 9479; AE 1939.45.

attached to each *magister militum*. By the sixth century these positions had become honorary and the staff roles were held by *scriboness*, though they seem less common than *protectores* had been.

By the early fourth century field army regiments were commanded by tribunes (*chiliarchoi* or *lochagoi*), border troop cohorts by *tribuni*, all other units by *praefecti* (*eparchoi*). However, even in official documents, holders of these posts could be designated as *praepositi*, a term simply meaning 'commanding officer'.¹¹⁴ In the fourth and early fifth centuries the majority had served as *protectores* for a few years (three to five?). Men whose careers started in the ranks of non-guard units were rarely promoted past unit commander, though Flavius Memorius ended his career as *comes Mauretaniae Tingitanae* after twenty-eight years in the *Ioviani* (ILS 2788). From the fifth century, with the ossification of the *protectores*, unit commanders came either from direct commission or as a result of long service. Conon, conscripted in 444 into a regiment of Isaurians, became its tribune c. 464 and remained there until his death in 491. Generals could also promote their *bucellarii* to become officers.¹¹⁵ By the 420s the commanders of *scholae* had been upgraded to *comites* and by the late sixth century, all regimental commanders in the field army were technically *comites*, though often still referred to as tribunes (Maurice, *Strat.* 1.3.16).

The ranks above unit commander were far more flexible, and distinct career patterns are even harder to establish. Along the borders third-century troops were usually commanded by provincial governors. Some had large commands, e.g. in Syria where there were three or four legions and about twenty *auxilia* regiments, though others, e.g. in Raetia, had only a few auxiliary regiments. From the mid-third century *duces* (*archai*) began to appear in numbers, initially subordinate to the governor and with a particular geographical focus, but replacing the governor by the end of the fourth century (see above). The careers of *duces* could be long and not always rewarding, particularly after the early fourth-century creation of the *comites*. But for every officer like Cassianus, who was *dux Mesopotamiae* between 356 and 363 and then is not heard of again, there are men like Rhcithangus who served as *dux* in Syria in 541, and was later assigned to field commands in Lazica and Illyricum.¹¹⁶ Although *duces* usually only commanded border troops, on some occasions field army troops were transferred to their commands. In these cases the *dux* was promoted to *comes rei militaris*, though when the field army troops were removed, the office reverted to a ducate.¹¹⁷ By the late sixth century *duces* often received the additional honour of *magister militum*, especially in Italy.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Jones (1964) 640; Grosse (1920) 143–51. ¹¹⁵ Cyr. Scyth. *Vita Sabae* 1, 9, 25; Jones (1964) 667.

¹¹⁶ Mann (1977); Lib. *Or.* 47.28. ¹¹⁷ Mann (1976) 7.

¹¹⁸ *PLRE* III 1505–6 for a list of possible cases.

Field troop commands varied in size from brigades to whole field armies. In the third century centurions, *praepositi* or *duces* could lead small field forces, like the *vexillatio* drawn from *legio I Illyricorum* and *III Gallica* which the *praepositus* Victorinus led in 316 (*ILS* 8882). These roles were taken over in the fourth century by *comites rei militaris*, a new rank created by Constantine.¹¹⁹ Some of these officers had a great deal of experience, like Sebastianus who had first served in the 350s as a border troop officer, *comes et dux Aegypti*. He was then attached to the *comitatus* as a *comes rei militaris* in Persia in 363, before moving with Valentinian I to fight in Gaul, still as *comes*, in 368. He was still in the west in 378 when he lost his post in a court intrigue but was soon summoned by the eastern emperor Valens to act as *magister peditum* against the Goths. From the early fourth century the *comes domesticorum* was usually in operational command of all of the *scholae*, a group collectively known as the *obsequi*.¹²⁰ Brigade commanders were *taxiarchoi* during the middle of the sixth century, with Goudouis holding this rank when he led 2,000 men against the Avars in 595 (Theophyl. Sim. 7.12.2, 7). By the end of the century they were *duces* or *chiliarchoi*. Although the *Strategicon* suggests they could also have been called *moirarchai*, no individual is known to have carried this title. In the east *duces* often carried out field operations in support of large armies, like Cutzes and Buzes. Others had important field commands. Thus Eiliphredas, *dux Phoenices Libanensis*, led the Roman left wing at the battle of Solachon in 586 while the right was under the *taxiarchos* Vitalius (Theophyl. Sim. 2.3.1–2).

The position of army commander also varied. Third-century armies were usually led by the emperor in person, as when Aurelian fought against Zenobia at Immae in 272 or Galerius against the Persians in 298. The emperor was usually accompanied by a praetorian prefect, who led troops and organized supplies. From the 260s a cavalry commander was created to lead the Illyrian cavalry portion of the *comitatus*. No precise title is known, but this post was held by Aureolus, Claudius and Aurelian. In extreme situations praetorian prefects could act alone, as when Volusianus led an army of Maxentius against Alexander in Africa in 309 (Zos. 2.14.2) or Maximianus led troops to Italy in 542 (Procop. *Wars* 7.6.9–12), while on other unusual occasions in late Roman history officials without military posts were placed in command (like Jovius and Bonus mentioned above).

In the early fourth century, probably after 324, Constantine eliminated the command role of praetorian prefects, replacing them with the new rank of *magister militum* who led armies on their own or assisted the emperor. Emperors continued to lead troops in the fourth century, but after the

¹¹⁹ Mann (1977). ¹²⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 7.1.17 (398); Haldon (1984) 142–50.

death of Theodosius I in 395 emperors rarely led armies in the field, though many, like Marcian or Justin I, had had military careers. But this was not impossible, and Zeno caused great excitement when he proposed to lead an army in 478 (Malchus fr. 18.3). Maurice commanded the defence of the Long Walls in 585 (Theophyl. Sim. 1.7.2), and after this emperors again began to lead troops in the field, most notably Heraclius. Before 337 there were only two *magistri militum*, but with the creation of regional armies, there was an increase in the number of *magistri*. In the east around 395 the praesental army was led by two equally ranked *magistri militum praesentales*, who were also equal in rank to the other three eastern *magistri* (Thrace, Illyricum, Oriens). The situation was similar in the west until the minority of Valentinian II (375–92), when one of the two *magistri militum* commanding the imperial army, Arbogast, so dominated the emperor that the *magister peditum* took charge of all western military positions, including regional *magistri*. After this the western *magister peditum* or *magister utriusque militiae* was often described as ‘the patrician’ and Arbogast, Stilicho, Aëtius and Ricimer used this position to control the western empire down to the 470s. By the mid-fourth century most *magistri militum* had previously served as *comes rei militaris* or *comes domesticorum*.¹²¹ Although there was some expectation of passing through all stages, swift promotions did occur. Ammianus commented (20.2.5) that Agilo was promoted with ‘unseemly haste’ from tribune of a unit of *scholae* to *magister peditum* in 360. Comentiolus was a *scribo* in the Balkans in 583, led troops successfully in 584 and by 585 was *magister militum* (Theophyl. Sim. 1.4.7, 1.7.3–4). Some *magistri militum* held office for long periods, e.g. Aspar, *magister militum praesentalis* in the east from 434 to 471. This was an extreme case, but many men served as *magistri* for a decade or longer. As late as the early fifth century it was possible to have a career spanning both east and west. In 393 Varanes was at Theodosius’ court in Constantinople and probably accompanied the emperor to Italy against Eugenius. He was given a western military position and by 408 had been promoted to *magister peditum*. Soon after this he was replaced and returned to Constantinople in 409 where he was appointed consul for 410. After this point careers were confined to either east or west. But it was still possible to have wide-ranging careers, and John Mystacon served as *magister militum* in Thrace, Armenia and Syria in the late sixth century. Towards the end of the sixth century there was an increasing tendency to combine offices and Maurice in 577 simultaneously held the offices of *comes excubitorum*, *comes foederatorum* and *magister militum per Orientem*. In the late sixth century the two eastern *magistri militum praesentales* were replaced by a single *comes obsequii*. In the

¹²¹ Demandt (1970).

reign of Maurice (582–602) the position of exarch was created, upgrading the *magister militum* in Africa and Italy.

Military service in the late Roman Empire was a professional career, with many men serving long terms in all parts of the empire. Reconstructing standard careers is difficult because of the patchiness of the evidence, but for most men and officers, for most of this period, it was a steady job, dominated more by regulations and relationships with colleagues than by the irregular situations which our evidence preserves.

IV. CONCLUSION

Throughout its history, the late Roman army was a standing professional force. Although it failed to perform well on some occasions, the loss of the western territories cannot be attributed to structural failure. There was no major change in the structure of the Roman army during most of this period. Justinian reconquered Italy and Africa in the sixth century with armies similar to those destroyed in the fifth-century west. The outstanding characteristics of the army were continuing small-scale change and institutional flexibility. But if the army was not structurally weak, why did the western Empire fall in the fifth century and the eastern Empire suffer so grievously in the seventh century? Good armies can and do lose wars. In the fifth century the Empire suffered irremediable problems only after the loss of Africa to the Vandals. Africa's importance is shown by the series of efforts to recapture it, ultimately successful in 533. In the seventh century financial exhaustion from the Persian wars explains much of the Roman inability to deal with the Arab attacks.

CHAPTER 9

WAR

MICHAEL WHITBY

The third century AD saw a fundamental shift in the circumstances of Roman war. For several centuries, indeed since the defeat of Hannibal, Romans had usually enjoyed the luxury of deciding when and where to go to war against foreign enemies: civil wars were clearly an exception, but opponents such as Mithridates who challenged the Romans to a confrontation were rare. As a result, the Romans could, to an extent, arrange their campaign commitments to suit themselves. In late antiquity almost the opposite situation prevailed: the majority of wars were undertaken in response to external threats, serious ones in contrast to the excuses which were sometimes exploited during the Republic to justify expansionist campaigns. This meant that the Romans no longer controlled so securely the place, timing or even nature of the wars which they had to fight; more campaigning occurred within the Empire's borders, and emperors were more often embarrassed by the need to deal with multiple threats; enemies might even have specific knowledge about Roman commitments elsewhere, and exploit this in their dealings (e.g. the Persians in 582: *Men. Prot. fr.* 26.1.40–58). Occasions when an emperor felt able to take the initiative were very rare: Julian's decision to invade Persia in 363 is one example, although that was in the context of a war which had already been running for twenty-five years; Justinian's plans for reconquest are a clearer case, since he deliberately set out to create stability on the eastern frontier in order to permit a strategic redeployment to the west, a policy which worked in the short term even if it was upset by Khusro's invasion in 540.

I. A DEFENSIVE WORLD?

One provocative analysis of late Roman warfare has suggested that the Empire moved from a system of preclusive defence to one of defence in depth:¹ Roman emperors came to accept that frontiers would be breached, with the result that sites in the interior had to be fortified and garrisoned;

¹ Luttwak (1976) ch. 3, though this does not deal with the post-Constantinian period; see pp. 108–13 above, and 425–6 below.

local troops, *limitanei*, whose quality supposedly declined, lost the ability to conduct major operations and the task of repelling invaders increasingly fell to units of the mobile army which might take time to arrive on the scene. The key change is connected by some with Constantine, on the basis of Zosimus' attack on his military policies (2.34):²

Through Diocletian's wisdom all the frontier areas of the Roman empire had been protected in the way described above with settlements and strongholds and towers, and all the soldiers were based here. The barbarians therefore could not break in, as forces with the ability to repulse invasions would encounter them everywhere. Constantine put an end to this security by withdrawing most of the troops from the frontiers and stationing them in cities that did not need protection, thereby depriving of protection those who were suffering from the barbarians and afflicting peaceful cities with the plague of soldiers . . .

Even if the pagan Zosimus can be trusted to report Constantine's actions correctly, which is dubious since he may have elevated the short-term measures of a civil-war campaign into a formal strategy, alternative explanations for redeployment are available: logistics and internal security may have influenced changes in military dispositions in some parts of the empire, while elsewhere, for example in Syria, Roman troops had always been dispersed quite widely around the region's cities.³ Another relevant issue is the Roman attitude to frontiers. Modern views may privilege the role of frontiers as boundaries to jurisdiction or limits whose upkeep or breach merits the commitment of significant effort. The construction of Hadrian's Wall could suggest that such an approach is relevant to the Roman empire, but broader ranging studies of Roman frontiers point to the exceptional nature of the north British arrangements and suggest that for much of the empire frontiers were often permeable zones.⁴ Nevertheless, while accepting the importance of cross-border trade and the benefits it brought to both sides, Roman boundaries existed for a variety of purposes, religious, fiscal and legal as well as military;⁵ some notice was likely to be taken of them both by outsiders who understood the difficulties of crossing contrary to Roman wishes (Amm. Marc. 31.3.8–4.5; Eunap. fr. 42) and by Romans who attempted to control all types of movement (Men. Prot. fr. 6.1.323–6, 332–40).

Neither defence in depth nor areas for mutual interaction can entirely explain the nature of late Roman frontiers, since exclusion was also an objective. The anonymous author of a submission, probably to Valens, of assorted and largely impractical military ideas stated: 'an unbroken chain of forts will best assure the protection of these frontiers, on the plan that they

² Cf. pp. 416–17 below. ³ Wheeler (1996); Pollard (2000) 66.

⁴ Whitaker (1994); see also Elton (1996b).

⁵ Cf. Braund (1996) on the varied significance to Romans of rivers as natural boundaries.

should be built at intervals of one mile, with a solid wall and very strong towers' (*De rebus bellicis* 20). The orator Themistius, possibly a close contemporary of this author, spoke of Valens' achievement on the Danube as 'from the hinterland to the coast you would think that an adamantine wall had been drawn out: with such a rampart of fortresses, arms and soldiers was it strengthened' (10.136c).⁶ The interpretation of panegyric rhetoric is not straightforward,⁷ but it is wrong to dismiss such assertions as empty boasting simply on the grounds that the defences in question were soon proved inadequate. The campaigning emperors of the fourth century are presented, in historiography as well as oratory, as devoting personal attention to defensive works on the Rhine and Danube, and allocating significant military resources to them (Amm. Marc. 16.11.11, 28.2.1–9; Them. *Or.* 10.137b–138b), while the sedentary Justinian considered plans and issued instructions about defences to provincial governors (Procop. *Build.* 2.3.1–15; Justinian, *Nov.* 26.4). Roman writers believed that enemies did regard new fortifications as a serious issue (Amm. Marc. 17.1.11–12; Procop. *Wars* 1.10.16–19).

However powerful the rhetoric of frontier defences may have been, it was also recognized that there would always be occasions on which enemies did manage to penetrate into the interior, and for this reason 'fortification in depth' had to be implemented.⁸ Julian wrote of the Gallic provinces being rendered unsafe to a depth of a hundred miles (*Epistula ad Athenienses* 279a), and Justinian attended to linear defences at Thermopylae and Corinth in spite of the claim to have secured the Danube (Procop. *Build.* 4.2.2–15, 27–8). Exclusion might be the imperial ideal, and was sometimes achieved, but more often the provincial reality would have been a variable level of provision: 'preclusive' and 'in depth' were not mutually exclusive strategies, and the latter was a sensible supplement to the former. Aurelian's massive circuit of walls for Rome was a sign of changed times: if the eternal city needed such protection, lesser places would follow. Other cities used as imperial capitals, such as Antioch and Thessalonica, were given impressive circuits; Constantinople eventually had three sets of walls, Constantine's defences which embraced the main inhabited area, the Theodosian walls (fig. 9.1) which protected most of the suburbs as well as essential cisterns and the Long Walls, also initiated by Theodosius II but refurbished by Anastasius and Justinian, located about 40 miles from the city.⁹ Although

⁶ For similar sentiments with regard to Justinian's defensive works, see Procop. *Build.* 2.1.3, 4.1.3–10 etc.

⁷ For defence of the view of panegyric as official message in the case of Themistius, see Heather and Moncur (2001) ch. 1; for relatively sympathetic assessments of Procopius' *Buildings* see Whitby (1988) 71–9 and many of the papers in *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000).

⁸ Tomlin (1987) 119–20.

⁹ Mango (1985) 24–5, 46–50; Whitby (1985) on the Long Walls; Crow and Ricci (1997) continue to favour construction by Anastasius.



Figure 9.1 Late Roman walls: Theodosian walls of Constantinople, early fifth century.

walls were probably built in a considerable hurry in some places, for example Nicaea where materials from earlier buildings (*spolia*) were reused to create the base, and might exclude suburbs and block off streets, as at Philippopolis or Athens,¹⁰ it also seems that fortifications could become a matter of pride as well as reassurance to inhabitants. Ausonius, who was certainly not a military man, commented positively on the defences of many of the cities in his little collection *On the Order of Famous Cities* – Trier, Milan, Aquileia, Toulouse, and his own city of Bordeaux: ‘The four-square aspect of her walls is so elevated with their tall towers that their tops reach the clouds in the sky’ (*Ordo nob. urb.* 20.13–14).

Another sign of changed times is provided by a sixth-century military manual: in a chapter on defence, the author states:

The fifth way applies when we are in absolutely no condition to continue fighting. We then choose to make peace, even though it may cause us some disadvantage. When faced with two evils, the lesser is to be chosen. Negotiating for peace may be chosen before other means, since it may very well offer the best prospect for protecting our own interests.

(Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 6; p. 22.25–9 Dennis (1985))

Such sentiments are implausible in earlier Roman history; those who negotiated to save their lives were worthless, as the survivors of Cannae discovered, and on the rare occasions when formal agreements were reached they were rapidly disowned. Responses to Jovian’s predicament in 363 point to

¹⁰ Foss and Winfield (1986) 80, 100; Hoddinott (1975) 291–3; Frantz (1988) 5–8.

the difference: he had to agree to surrender substantial frontier regions in order to extricate Julian's army from Persia, but was then urged to repudiate the deal as soon as he had reached safety, with the Republican precedents for disregarding dishonourable agreements with Samnites and Numantines being cited (Eutr. 10.17; Amm. Marc. 25.9.11); Jovian insisted that he did not wish to be a perjurer (Malalas 13.27 Thurn = 336.19–21 Dindorf) but was prepared within the empire to be represented as a victor.¹¹ In the sixth century numerous cities in the eastern provinces found it expedient to come to local agreements with invading armies, purchasing immunity from attack for substantial sums of gold (e.g. Edessa in 540), while in the seventh century these cities often struck deals which placed them under Arab control.¹²

In this situation it is not surprising that Romans began to pay closer attention to their neighbours, to discover more about them and to think of ways of securing military advantage without the risks of direct warfare.¹³ An enemy might now even threaten the very elimination of the Empire, as the Avar Chagan boasted during the 626 siege of Constantinople:

Look the Persians have sent an embassy to me and are ready to give me 3,000 men in alliance. Therefore if each of you in the city is prepared to take no more than a cloak and a shirt, we will make a compact with Salbaras [Shahvaraz], for he is my friend: cross over to him and he will not harm you; leave me your city and property. For otherwise it is impossible for you to be saved, unless you become fish and depart by sea, or birds and ascend to the sky.

(*Chron. Pasch.* 721.14–21)

In the mid-fifth century Attila had made similar, though rather more distant, threats to both halves of the empire, with the Persian kingdom also on his list of prospective conquests (Priscus fr. 11.2.620–36), but most enemies had more limited aims. In normal circumstances groups such as the Franks, Alamanni, Quadi or Tervingi were powerful enough to withstand all but the most determined of Roman attacks, although repeated ravaging of their territories could bring them to heel; they could also cause significant damage to frontier provinces, especially if Roman defenders were distracted by internal conflicts or by military threats in other areas. The Alamannic army of 35,000 which faced Julian at Strasbourg represented a major mobilization under a charismatic leader who had managed to secure the cooperation of several lesser rulers (Amm. Marc. 16.12.26). Other comparably powerful tribal groups, for example the Ostrogoths and Vandals, appear to have been able to field 25,000–30,000 fighting men.¹⁴ Peoples such as the Slavs who lacked recognized hierarchies fought in much smaller units, hundreds rather than thousands of fighters, but their fluidity and lack of structure made them

¹¹ Them. Or. 5.66a; cf. *CIL* 5.8037 for a milestone from north Italy which describes Jovian as *victor et triumphator*.

¹² Kaegi (1992) 100–9.

¹³ Cf. pp. 246–50 above.

¹⁴ Heather (1996) 176.

difficult to subdue and control (Maurice, *Strat.* 11.4.3–7, 51–68). Small bodies of Slavs were adept at avoiding Roman attacks by withdrawing to hills, woods or swamps (Procop. *Wars* 7.40.7; Theophyl. Sim. 6.8.10–12, 7.5.1–5).

On two occasions in late antiquity warfare on European frontiers was transformed by the arrival of a ‘super-élite’, the Huns in the fifth century and the Avars in the late sixth, ruling groups who had emerged from the south Russian steppe where their terrifying qualities as leaders had been honed; in each case they settled in the Hungarian plain, from where they imposed their control over other groups north of the Danube and attempted with less success to assert themselves to the west.¹⁵ Both Huns and Avars first affected the empire indirectly through the impact of their reputation on other tribes who might regard the challenge of tackling Roman frontiers as less dangerous than awaiting the arrival of new masters, e.g. the Goths in 376, but they were also exceptionally destructive. At the height of their power they each controlled very large fighting resources, the equivalent of several normal tribes, and they had to exploit this manpower to generate the booty which sustained the cohesion of their federation: it was impossible for them to stand still since this would only encourage disaffection within subordinate groups. Regular warfare, much of it against the Romans as the richest source of booty, was inevitable.

Hun and Avar rulers had little concern for casualties, since losses would have fallen most heavily among the lesser tribes and so helped to maintain the élite’s overall dominance. One consequence was that both groups were unusually good at capturing fortifications. On this activity the attitude of most of the empire’s European neighbours is epitomized by the Goth Fritigern’s comment that ‘He had no quarrel with stone walls’ (Amm. Marc. 31.6.4; cf. 16.2.12 for the Alamanni avoiding towns ‘as if they were tombs surrounded by nets’). Places might be captured by surprise or deception, as when Slavs lured the defenders of Topirus outside their walls (Procop. *Wars* 7.38), but full-scale sieges were rare – Cologne succumbed after long resistance but at Lyons the loss of surprise doomed an attack (Amm. Marc. 15.8.19, 16.11.4). By contrast the Huns and Avars managed to overrun most of the major fortified cities in the Balkans, thereby destroying the centres of Roman control and making the process of imperial recovery much more difficult. Both groups had some capacity in using siege machinery,¹⁶ and the Avars are associated with fearsome stone throwers and towers (*Miracula S. Demetrii* 200; *Chron. Pasch.* 719.14–720.3), but they also relied on human waves to overrun defences.

For the Empire’s European enemies organization was a common weakness, which affected their ability to maintain an army in the field or endure a protracted series of campaigns, especially if their homelands were under threat. Even the Huns and Avars were fallible in this respect, relying on

¹⁵ Thompson (1996) ch. 2; Heather (1995). ¹⁶ Cf. pp. 349–62 below.

rapid results when on the offensive and vulnerable to direct pressure in Pannonia, as the Avars showed in 599. The Sasanid Persians by contrast matched the Romans in sophistication and organization, having the capacity to field armies as large as anything which the Romans could mobilize, perhaps in the order of 50,000–60,000 men at the very largest,¹⁷ and being able to sustain the strains of protracted conflict, for decades if necessary.¹⁸ Persian society was geared to war and Sasanid rulers depended heavily on military success for the prestige to dominate their nobility and priesthood.¹⁹ Like the Romans the Persians had to contend with different enemies on their various frontiers, and evolved the appropriate strategies for dealing with each.²⁰ As a result their armies contained a variety of elements, some raised internally others hired from abroad. Of particular importance for the nature of conflict in the Middle East was the capacity to capture cities: the Persians rivalled Roman engineering skills, as they displayed in a tradition of successful sieges (e.g. Singara, 360; Amida, 502; Antioch, 540; Dara, 573).

It might seem strange that the Empire did not succumb in either east or west to its most powerful enemies, the Huns, Avars or Persians: on the Rhine the simultaneous invasions of several moderately powerful tribes in 406 placed the west on a cycle of declining resources and diminished power,²¹ while in the Balkans it was the lowly Slavs who, in part fleeing from Avar domination, in part exploiting the destruction of Roman cities and other defences by the Avars, came to occupy Roman territory.²² The Middle East, the whole of the Sasanid kingdom as well as the wealthiest of Roman provinces, fell to the Arabs within a couple of decades (630s–640s), an achievement which reflected the dynamism of Islamic warriors, organized in the name of religion but inspired by traditional raiding objectives,²³ as well as the exhaustion of their established neighbours who had just spent almost half a century in mutually destructive conflict (572–91, 602–27). Numbers, fluidity and unpredictability all contributed to the unstoppable nature of the early Islamic expansion, but, before the seventh century, Arab contribution to warfare in the Levant had been of modest proportions.²⁴

II. PATTERNS OF WAR

Most warfare had the predictable rhythms imposed by seasons and logistics. In the east Roman commanders could forecast when Arab tribes would be inactive because of religious celebrations (Procop. *Wars* 2.16.18), a period

¹⁷ Howard-Johnston (1995b) 165–9.

¹⁸ Disagreement about the fiscal underpinning for Persian military activity does not affect this conclusion: for conflicting views, see Howard-Johnston (1995b) and Rubin (1995).

¹⁹ Whitby (1994). ²⁰ Cf. pp. 242–3 above.

²¹ Heather (2000). ²² Whitby (1988) 174–6, 185–91. ²³ Conrad (2000) 697–700.

²⁴ Whitby (1992b); contrast Shahīd (1989) and (1995), but see Whittow (1999).

which happened to coincide with the months when flooding may have been problematic. In Armenia the harsh winters meant that major Persian expeditions were unlikely to arrive before August, although Khusro managed to surprise the Romans in 576 (Men. Prot. fr. 18.6.18–26); the severity of conditions is alluded to in Heraclius' victory dispatch from Ganzak in 628 (*Chron. Pasch.* 731.10–732.15). In the Balkans it appears that the Avars tended to launch attacks in the early autumn, probably to exploit the availability of supplies. Winter was normally the time for the dispersal of armies between several bases for ease of supply, before reassembling in the spring – at Monocarton in the east in the 570s and 580s, and at Heracleia on the sea of Marmara in the 590s (Theophyl. Sim. 3.1.3, 6.6.3). After an abnormally deep invasion an army might have to winter in enemy territory and stay in a relatively compact disposition, as Justin II did near the Caspian in 576/7 and Heraclius at Ganzak in 627/8 (Theophyl. Sim. 3.15.2; *Chron. Pasch.* 732.6–18). Determined sieges might also entail that fighting continued into the winter, as at Amida in 502/3 and Dara in 573, but on other occasions a looser blockade seems to have been maintained, as on Martyropolis in 589/90 (Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.*, 6.15). Maurice's determination that his troops should campaign against the Slavs during winter (*Strat.* II.4.82–6), though strategically intelligent, was contrary to contemporary military practice and provoked mutiny (Theophyl. Sim. 8.6).

The prominence of defensive activity in late antiquity helped to determine the location and nature of Roman fighting. With many wars occurring within the empire, Roman commanders usually had the necessary geographical knowledge to fight effectively, and indeed might be able to exploit this, for example in 479 when Sabinianus attacked a Gothic wagon train in the central Balkan mountains and secured substantial booty (Malchus fr. 20.226–48).²⁵ Problems, however, could arise when Roman authority was being reasserted over an area: in the autumn of 599 the general Comentiolus encountered severe difficulties while attempting to reopen the Trojan Pass, an important route across the central Haemus which had apparently not been used for ninety years (Theophyl. Sim. 8.4.4–7). Expeditions outside the empire were also often fought on relatively familiar terrain, so that historical precedents could be consulted: Constantius' campaign against Persia in 337 seems to have inspired the publication of the *Itinerarium Alexandri*, which had originally also contained information on Rome's great eastern conqueror, Trajan.²⁶ Here too there were limits to knowledge. It was possible for locals to mislead Julian's army as it manoeuvred near Ctesiphon (Amm. Marc. 24.7.3, 5), an area that would have been less familiar to Romans than

²⁵ Comentiolus' campaign in 587, when he first disengaged his army from the Avars and then organized a surprise night attack, is another, though less successful, example (Theophyl. Sim. 2.11.3–15.12).

²⁶ Barnes (1985b) 135.

the invasion route down the Euphrates. Problems beyond the European river frontiers were generally more severe since here the presence of forests and/or marshes gave a significant advantage to up-to-date local knowledge: Romans frequently had difficulty in penetrating such inhospitable terrain, and in the late sixth century the Romans depended heavily on securing local cooperation to reach their enemies (Theophyl. Sim. 6.8.13–9.13).

With regard to the typology of warfare presented by Goldsworthy in ch. 3 in this volume, it will be no surprise that late antiquity presents a very different balance. Wars of conquest are extremely rare, the clearest examples being the Justinianic campaigns of reconquest in Africa and Italy. Justin II's attack on Persia in 572 may have begun as an attempt to recapture Nisibis, but it quickly reverted to the customary struggle to preserve existing possessions;²⁷ Heraclius' eastern campaigns in the 620s shared some of the grand sweep of a war of conquest, and effectively involved the reconquest of most of the empire's territory in Asia. On the European frontiers there was never an attempt to assert more than patronal control over external peoples and their lands; in the east, although the Romans gained significant territory after the victories of Galerius (298) and Heraclius (628), expansion was not the primary motive for conflict even for the most substantial invasions of Persia such as those of Carus (283) and Julian.

Internal security was always an issue,²⁸ and banditry a problem especially in areas recently affected by invasions or civil war, but there were few occasions when rebellions needed to be suppressed. Not surprisingly the two major Justinianic acts of conquest generated the sort of second-phase reaction which the Romans experienced more often in the early Empire, with a sequence of revolts in Africa in the 530s and 540s and the revival of Gothic resistance after the surrender of Ravenna; the Tzanni also had to be pacified soon after their subordination to Roman control (Agathias 5.1–2). In the west the diminution of imperial authority occasioned bouts of local self-help to which the name *bacaudae* was attached,²⁹ the Samaritans twice caused serious trouble in Palestine, in 529 and 555, partly for religious reasons,³⁰ and at the end of the sixth century the Aykelah brothers led a serious but obscure revolt in the Egyptian delta.³¹ The most destructive acts of civilian unrest were the occasional bouts of urban rioting associated with the circus factions, some of whose conflicts were virtual battles, especially the Nika riot of 532 when troops had to fight their way into Constantinople from their suburban bases and 30,000 perished in the Hippodrome

²⁷ On this, see Whitby (1988). ²⁸ Isaac (1990) esp. ch. 2.

²⁹ Interpretations of these shadowy people vary, but this is the plausible theory of Drinkwater (1992).

³⁰ Malalas 18.35 Thurn = 445.19–447.21 Dindorf; *Excerpta de insidiis* 173, Malalas fr. 48. See Winkler (1965); Rabello (1989).

³¹ John of Nikiu 97; Liebeschuetz (2001) ch. 8.

massacre on the final day.³² Overall religion occasioned the most frequent disruptions to require military intervention, for example the campaign of Marcellus of Apamea to destroy pagan temples (Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 7.15), or the Christological disputes at Alexandria which resulted in the patriarch Proterius being ripped into small pieces in 457 and subsequent orthodox leaders only dominating the city with military support (Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.8).

Punitive expeditions and raiding were the most common form of campaigning on all fronts, being particularly suited to the overall defensive tendency of late Roman warfare. In Europe the targets were manpower and food reserves. The mechanics are clear from two campaigns undertaken across the Rhine by Julian after his proclamation as Augustus had increased the need to secure the frontier in advance of any confrontation with Constantius: secrecy was vital, to prevent the targets from melting away into forests, marshes or similarly difficult terrain where the relatively cumbersome Roman army would be unable to pursue quickly; there should be a short sharp engagement, preferably with a reasonable number of enemy casualties to encourage their leadership to come to terms, and then a rapid withdrawal (Amm. Marc. 20.10, 21.4.7–8). Success was elusive as campaigns on the Danube and Rhine in the 360s demonstrate: in three successive attacks Valens failed to engage the Goths decisively, partly because the Goths were reluctant to confront him, partly because flooding impeded progress, with the result that peace was agreed on relatively equal terms, the leaders meeting on boats in the middle of the Danube (Amm. Marc. 27.5);³³ Valentinian found it difficult to catch the Alamanni and even when the ravaging of crops brought them to battle the unfavourable conditions meant that the Romans could only achieve an expensive victory (Amm. Marc. 27.10.6–16). Maurice's *Strategicon* devoted particular attention to the challenge of confronting the Slavs in these conditions (11.4, 12.B.20–1). In the east acquisition of booty played a part (e.g. Theophyl. Sim. 1.13.5), but here the nature of Persian control of territory meant that the construction or capture of fortresses was also a significant element in the establishment of tactical superiority on the frontier, for example Belisarius' destruction of Sisauranon in 542 or Maurice's capture of Aphum in 578 (Procop. *Wars* 2.19.1–25; Theophyl. Sim. 3.15.13–15).³⁴ For a ravaging expedition to have a substantial impact on the Persian state it was necessary to penetrate deep into the empire towards sensitive locations such as Seleucia–Ctesiphon in lower Mesopotamia or the fire temple at Takht-i Suleiman in Azerbaijan.

³² Bury (1897); Greatrex (1997); Whitby (1999).

³³ Discussion in Heather (1991) 115–21. Contrast Eunap. fr. 18.6 for the ideal result from the Roman perspective.

³⁴ Whitby (1988) 209–13.

External action was frequently insufficient to blunt enemy aggression and the Romans often had to fight defensively within their own frontiers: much of the campaigning during the 'crisis' of the third century was of this nature. Different strategies were involved, since the Romans often had the advantage in local knowledge, internal lines of communication, logistical support and access to secure bases. In 377 Valens' generals attempted to deal with the Gothic disruption in the Balkans by blocking the passes across the Haemus and starving the enemy into submission (Amm. Marc. 31.8.1); these passes were a possible obstacle to the Avars in the late sixth century (Theophyl. Sim. 6.4.7–12). There were other barriers further to the south at Thermopylae, the Isthmus of Corinth and the Gallipoli peninsula where emperors supplemented natural defences (Procop. *Build.* 4.2.2–15, 4.2.27–8, 10.1–23), and the approach to the suburbs of Constantinople was blocked by Long Walls from Selymbria to the Black Sea (*Build.* 4.9.1–13). In the east the Euphrates constituted a similar barrier to invasion, and in 359 Constantius II was prepared to sanction a scorched-earth policy to the east of the river in order to deny supplies to the Persians with the river being strongly defended to prevent deeper penetration (Amm. Marc. 18.7.3–6). During two decades of war against the Persians Constantius relied on the frontier provinces, and especially the major fortified cities such as Singara, Nisibis and Amida, to soak up the Persian pressure, a policy which worked reasonably well.³⁵ In Gaul, once the Rhine was crossed, there were no obvious internal barriers until the Pyrenees and Alps were reached; in the third and fourth centuries invasions did not penetrate that deeply, though in the troubled circumstances of the early fifth century both mountain ranges played their part in blocking movement (Zos. 6.2.5–6, 6.5.1). If invaders were successful in securing booty, they might find it no easier to withdraw than Romans did from their cross-border forays: after the *Laeti* ravaged the vicinity of Lyons, Julian had their three possible escape routes watched with the result that the tribesmen were slaughtered and their booty recovered (Amm. Marc. 16.11.4–6).³⁶

In such circumstances the duration of conflicts was not always under Roman control. A successful punitive expedition could be over quite quickly, but in the late sixth century the attempt to dominate the Slavs on the Danube posed considerable problems since the lack of recognized centres of authority entailed that the Romans had to overawe a wide spread of local leaders through constant campaigning; in the end the strain, especially of proposed winter campaigns, proved too great for the Roman armies.³⁷ A single successful attack on the empire might be enough to produce the offer of a peace payment, especially if cities had been captured: this was the experience of the Huns in the 440s and the Avars in the 580s and early

³⁵ Warmington (1977).

³⁶ Cf. Tomlin (1987) 119–20.

³⁷ Whitby (1988) 165–9.

seventh century when substantial gifts appeared to be the best method of securing short-term peace. In the east wars might last a very long time – twenty-five years in the cases of the wars initiated by Constantine (337–63) and provoked by Maurice's overthrow (603–28) – or be finished rapidly: on two occasions in the fifth century the Persians seemed to exploit Roman problems in the Balkans and the west to pursue minor grievances (421–2, 440–1),³⁸ although each time the combination of a spirited Roman response and Persian distractions in the north-east soon led to the re-establishment of peace.

III. TERMINATION OF WAR

It was usually to the Romans' advantage to confirm the cessation of hostilities with a formal agreement.³⁹ In the east written treaties became increasingly more specific during the fifth century as the two great powers of the Middle East attempted to identify and resolve potentially disruptive issues such as the reception of each other's allies, construction of frontier fortifications, costs of defending the Caucasus passes and freedom of religious worship.⁴⁰ This process culminated in the Fifty-Years' Peace of 561, whose detailed provisions are preserved by Menander (fr. 6.I.314–407). On the other hand even in the relatively stable east treaties succumbed to the pressure of events and personalities: Kavadh attempted to squeeze money out of Anastasius on several occasions between 490 and 502, partly to pay off the Hephthalites on his north-east frontier but partly as well to bolster his position internally, and he eventually went to war to obtain it;⁴¹ Justin II took an equally belligerent approach to the Persians in 572 when he refused to make the payments due under the Fifty-Years' Peace.⁴² In this well-regulated arena conflict could be confined to specific areas such as Lazica (545–50) or Armenia (575–8), or war might just peter out if attention was distracted, as probably happened when the seven-year truce of 506 remained in effect for two decades. Down to the end of the fourth century the most significant agreements involved territorial adjustments (299, 363, 376), whereas in the sixth century the Romans accepted that it was necessary to pay Persia in order to secure compliance, at 500 or 550 pounds of gold per year in 506 and 416 pounds in 561 with the Endless Peace of 532 costing 11,000 pounds (or about twenty years' payments). Transfers of money might suggest a mutual lack of confidence, but they also reflected a recognition of the stability of the current frontier whose disruption on the basis of limited advantage would merely provoke retaliation: Khusro II was keen to recover the enforced

³⁸ For the opposite interpretation, with the Romans to blame, see Rubin (1986).

³⁹ See further pp. 259–62 above.

⁴⁰ Blockley (1992) 57–8, 61; cf. p. 260 above. ⁴¹ Blockley (1992) 88–90.

⁴² Whitby (1988) 250–3.

concessions of 591 which had placed him in the shameful position of failing to preserve his inherited kingdom (cf. Men. Prot. fr. 23.9.83–9 for Hormizd in 579). The return to territorial switches in 591 and again in 628 brought short-term benefits to the Romans,⁴³ but also perhaps signalled an overall decline in the solidity of relations.

On European frontiers the durability of agreements depended largely on the authority of individual tribal leaders, who needed to be overawed by the impression of Roman power and soothed by Roman gifts and money. Payments without the backing of military might were only effective in the short term, as was demonstrated by escalating demands from Huns in the 440s and Avars in the 580s and early seventh century. As a result Roman emperors were keen to secure at least a diplomatic success to shore up agreements, but it was rarely possible to achieve the *coup de théâtre* over the Chamavi that Julian arranged when he displayed their leader's son who was believed to have perished (Eunap. fr. 18.6). On other occasions the encounter might be more balanced, as when Valens met Athanaric in the middle of the Danube to agree a treaty (Amm. Marc. 27.5.9),⁴⁴ or even turn out unfortunately for the Romans: in 375 Valentinian died of apoplexy during a confrontation designed to overawe representatives of the Quadi (Amm. Marc. 30.6), while in 623 Heraclius only narrowly avoided capture by the Avars whom he had been hoping to impress with a full-scale ceremonial meeting at Heracleia (Nicephorus 10). It was common for Romans to consolidate these agreements by demands for hostages who could, if they were young, be educated and perhaps even shaped into appreciating the benefits of cooperation with the Empire: a good example is Theoderic the Amal who was sent to Constantinople at the age of eight and remained for ten years (Jord. Get. 269–71, 281). In the seventh century Romans, including members of the imperial family, found themselves being sent as hostages to the Avars (Nicephorus 13.4–9).

IV. PREPARATIONS

Warfare was preceded by careful preparations, not just of men and material but also of information, as appears from a tenth-century account which purports to describe Constantine's practice:

When he was intending to go on an expedition, Constantine the Great was accustomed to take counsel with those who had experience in the relevant matters, such as where and when the expedition should be undertaken. When he had ascertained from this advice the place and time for the expedition, he was also accustomed to enquire as to which others knew about these matters, particularly those with recent experience. And when he had found whether any others were knowledgeable, he

⁴³ Whitby (1988) 303–4.

⁴⁴ For the context, see Heather (1991) 117–20.

summoned these also and asked each one individually how long the route was which ran from home territory to the objective, and of what sort; and whether one road or many led to the objective; and whether the regions along the route were waterless or not. And he then enquired as to which road was narrow, precipitous and dangerous, and which broad and traversible; also whether there was any great river along the way which could not be crossed. Next he enquired about the country: how many fortresses it possessed, which were secure and which insecure, which populous and which sparsely populated, what distance these fortresses were from one another; and of what sort were the villages about them, large or small, and whether these regions were level or rough, grassy or arid. He asked this on account of fodder for the horses. He then enquired about which army was available to support these fortresses in time of war . . .

(Const. Porph., B.1–19, trans. Haldon (1990b))

Such thoroughness may well have been an ideal, but the interest demonstrated by emperors in foreign places and peoples (e.g. Men. Prot. fr. 10.1.68–88, for Justin II's questions about the Turks) renders the description plausible, even if it runs counter to minimalist views on the strategic capacity of emperors.⁴⁵ The intention was to have only one 'active' frontier, and to focus resources on that particular area, for example Persia in 363, the west in 533–40, the Balkans in 592–602, though such control of external affairs was rare since, as noted above (p. 310), enemies might specifically exploit the diversion of Roman resources away from their area (e.g. Attila in 441; Khusro in 540). More often emperors had to indulge in strategic juggling, by pursuing 'passive' or 'reactive' strategies in certain areas, for example the east during Constantius II's reign or the Balkans in the 570s and 580s.⁴⁶ The late imperial army was very large, but the deployable pool of manpower was quite limited once its numerous static or institutional commitments were taken into account.⁴⁷ Large campaigns involved the assembly of troops from different provinces: in 359 Constantius instructed Julian to send troops from Gaul to the east, while in 591 a substantial portion of the eastern army was switched from Armenia to the Balkans (Amm. Marc. 20.4.1–7; Theophyl. Sim. 5.16.1). Most transfers marched along the road network, but occasionally troops were moved by sea: campaigns in Britain were an obvious case, as when Maximian prepared to oust Carausius (*Pan. Lat.* 10.12), and the various attempts to eject the Vandals from Africa required substantial naval expeditions from Constantinople, culminating in Belisarius' successful campaign in 533 which involved 500 ships with an escort of 92 warships (Procop. *Wars* 3.11.13–15). Movement by ship could be much more rapid than on land, as Julian demonstrated in 360 when he travelled down the Danube from Raetia to surprise Lucillianus at

⁴⁵ E.g. Millar (1982).

⁴⁶ Cf. Whittaker (1996) 33 for the emergence of coordinated frontier policies in late antiquity.

⁴⁷ Treadgold (1995) 58, 86; Elton, ch. 8 in this volume.

Sirmium – though he did not permit his troops to land to collect supplies (Amm. Marc. 21.9).

Logistics were a vital underpinning to any military activity,⁴⁸ and an area in which the Romans usually surpassed most of its enemies. The Empire was in effect a machine geared towards the production of resources to support the armies which upheld its existence: the closeness of the link underlies a hypothetical response to emperor Probus' statement that there would soon be no need for soldiers, 'The entire world will forge no arms and furnish no rations' (*SHA Prob.* 20.5–6). Military needs are seen as a major factor behind the changes in the tax system during the third century when a proportion of imperial revenues were exacted in kind.⁴⁹ An increasingly complex system emerged, probably being organized across the empire under Diocletian: supplies were extracted from the agricultural tax base, transported to military warehouses and then disbursed to units as their subsistence allowance (*annona*). The process generated a substantial body of legislation, with the title 'Concerning the Issue of the Military *annona*' being the largest section in the coverage of military affairs in the *Codex Theodosianus* (7.4). Most of the laws concern possible abuses of the system, accountants who sold supplies for personal gain or refused to provide the requisitions from units, and officers who declined to accept supplies so as to be able to squeeze exactions directly from producers, but there is also some information on actual campaigns: Constantius II decreed that 'Soldiers must receive from the state storehouses rations for 20 days, so that they may convey these supplies along with them to provide for their personal needs on campaigns' (*Cod. Theod.* 7.4.5), and observed that:

Study of past practice has revealed that our soldiers, during the time of a campaign, are accustomed to receive hard tack [*buccellatum*] and bread, ordinary wine and also sour wine, and meat, both pork and mutton, as follows: hard tack for two days out of three, bread on the third day; ordinary wine on one day, sour wine on the other; pork for one day out of three, mutton on the other two days.

(*Cod. Theod.* 7.4.6)

Although Roman armies might on occasion hope to support themselves from ravaging (e.g. Theophyl. Sim. 3.16.2), it is clear that most campaigns depended on the careful organization of supplies: thus Constantius, recognizing that he would have to confront the usurper Julian, ensured his control of Africa and its vital food supplies well in advance of his intended move westwards (Amm. Marc. 21.7.2).⁵⁰ Because the Romans were often

⁴⁸ For discussion of supplies from the perspectives of official organisation and civilian providers, see pp. 409–12, 445–9 below.

⁴⁹ Jones (1964) 29–32; Garnsey and Humfress (2001) 19–20; see further Fear, ch. 12 in this volume.

⁵⁰ See also Amm. Marc. 19.11.2 for availability of supplies contributing to Constantius' enthusiasm to campaign at Sirmium in 359; for other references, see Elton (1996b) 237.

operating on the defensive, their armies were able to rely on powerful fortifications to protect supplies. The scale of preparations could be massive, as a contemporary observer records at Edessa for the Persian war under Anastasius (Ps.-Joshua Stylites 54, 70).⁵¹ Ideally supplies were generated in the nearest provinces, as revealed by a tax-remission edict of Tiberius II which refers to the continued need for exactions in kind for storage and military needs in Osroene and Mesopotamia (*Nov.* 163.2). But if frontier areas had been severely ravaged or were unsettled, supplies had to be brought from further afield, in which case transport by boat for the substantial quantities required was particularly important: Julian in Gaul arranged for grain to be shipped from Britain to the Rhine armies (*Lib. Or.* 18.83), and Justinian's construction of a new administrative unit which combined the Danubian provinces of Scythia and Moesia II with the Aegean islands, Caria and Cyprus is best understood as a response to the supply problems of the forces in the north Balkans (*Nov.* 51).⁵² Here the Danube was vital for the maintenance of the Roman front line, especially after the Hunnic invasions of the 440s had devastated the cities and rural infrastructure of the interior: fortified cities could hold out provided that they had access to the river, but the obstruction of communications by boat would eventually be fatal, as the Avar Chagan well knew when he ordered the construction of bridges above and below Sirmium – Roman attempts to breach the barriers failed and the city succumbed after a three-year blockade (*Joh. Eph. Hist. eccl.* 6.24, 30; *Men. Prot. fr.* 25, 27).

Control of supplies became an important weapon against invaders, whose initial thrusts could be blunted as parts of their force had to be assigned to foraging.⁵³ Even the relatively well-organized Persians experienced these problems (Ps.-Joshua Stylites 58), but they were more acute on the European frontiers: starvation was deployed against Gothic invaders of the Balkans in 377; 'they hoped . . . they would perish from lack of food; for all the necessities of life had been taken to the strong cities' (*Amm. Marc.* 31.8.1). Allocation of food was one of the most powerful levers to regulate the behaviour of tribal invaders, and access to Roman ration allocations was a recurrent demand in the dealings of Gothic and other leaders with successive emperors, especially Zeno (e.g. *Malchus fr.* 18.1, 20.48–58).

Offensive operations also depended upon secure supply lines, as Anastasius' generals explained when challenged about their failures in the eastern campaigns of 502–5:

it was no easy matter for them to subdue Nisibis, because they had no engines ready nor any refuge in which to rest. For the fortresses were far away and were too small to receive the army, and neither the supply of water in them nor the

⁵¹ For the legal position on production see *Cod. Theod.* 7.5.

⁵² Jones (1964) 280; Henny (1985) 397–404. ⁵³ Tomlin (1987) 119–20.



Figure 9.2 Granaries at Dara, early sixth century.

vegetables were sufficient. And they begged him that a city should be built by his command beside the mountain, as a refuge for the army in which they might rest and for the preparation of weapons . . .

(Zach. *Hist. eccl.* 7.6)

As a result Dara was constructed, and the remains of large cisterns and granaries are still clear in the ruins of the site (figs. 9.2, 9.3). For substantial thrusts into lower Mesopotamia the Euphrates served as the supply route: Julian's invasion in 363 was accompanied by a fleet of grain ships which had to be destroyed when the army began to withdraw up the Tigris; thereafter Persian scorched-earth tactics caused problems and officers' supplies were distributed throughout the army (Amm. Marc. 24.7.4–8, 25.2.1–2; cf. Theophyl. Sim. 3.17.10 for Maurice in 581). In the Balkans Attila's demand that the Romans leave deserted a tract of land five days' journey wide to the south of the Danube impeded the Romans' ability to intervene in the affairs of his empire. The intensity and duration of ravaging in the Balkans meant that provincial campaigns came to resemble external expeditions: in 499 the *magister militum per Illyricum* Aristus led an army of 15,000 and 520 wagons to defeat in Thrace (Marc. Com. s.a.); in the 590s it is noticeable that Roman armies mobilized and retired to winter quarters near the Black Sea coast and the sea of Marmara, an indication that it was difficult to base troops in large groups further north (e.g. Theophyl. Sim. 6.6.3, 7.1.3). Rivers again offered good support, with the fleet being an essential element

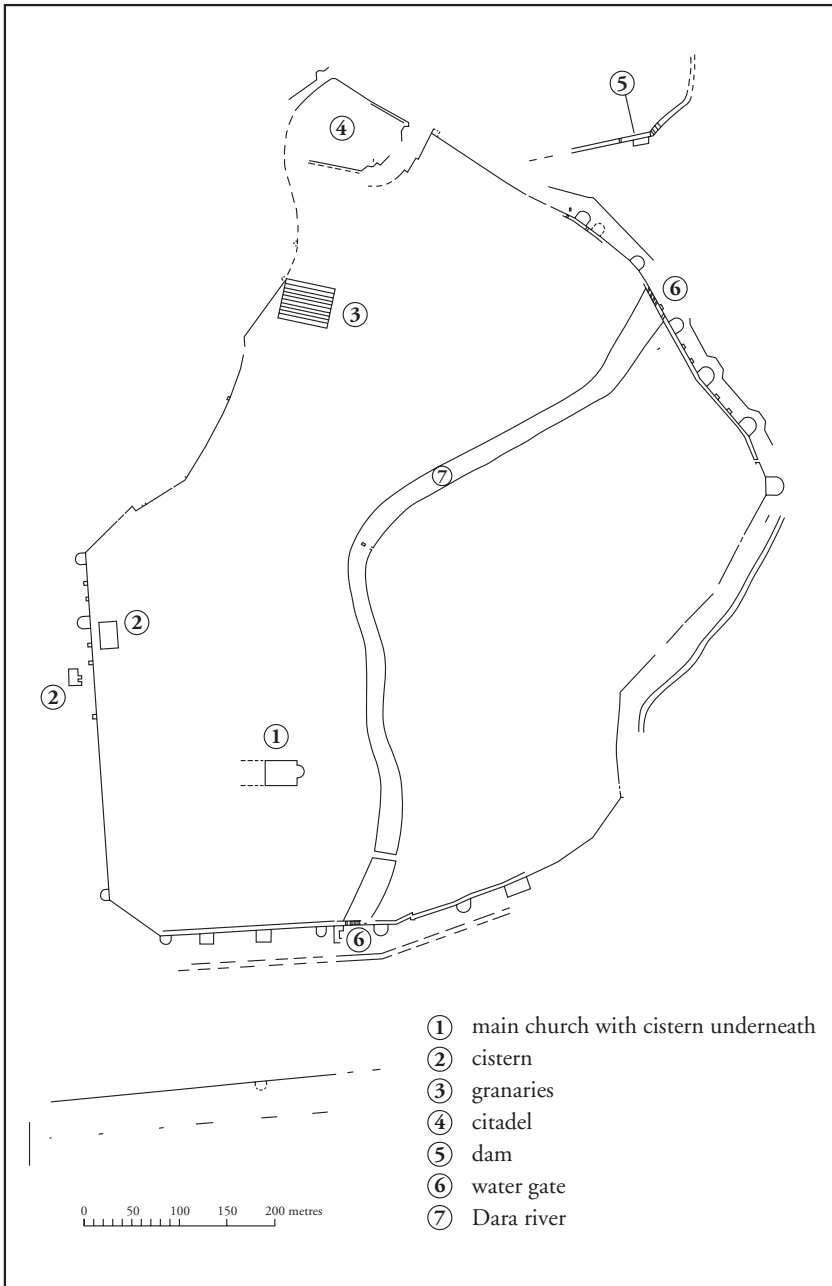


Figure 9.3 Plan of Dara, early to mid-sixth century.

in offensive actions north of the Danube (Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.21). However, unless supplies had been secured well in advance, probably as part of a regular requisitioning process, action could be seriously delayed and the chance of surprise lost: in 375 Valentinian spent three months at Carnuntum gathering materials for a campaign against the Quadi (Amm. Marc. 30.5.11). The Justinianic expeditions to the west were inevitably supplied by sea, and Procopius records problems caused for the Vandal campaign by alleged penny-pinching in the production of the staple hard tack (Procop. *Wars* 3.13.12–20). Control of the sea remained crucial during the protracted war in Italy, especially during the Gothic revival of the 540s which forced the eastern armies to rely on imported supplies, and even a small Gothic flotilla managed to cause significant problems for Belisarius (Procop. *Wars* 7.13.6–7).

V. CAMPAIGNS

So spoke Bouzes; and in his words he seemed to set forth the advantageous course of action, but of what was necessary he did nothing. For he chose out all that portion of the Roman army which was of marked excellence and went off. And where on earth he was neither did any of the Romans in Hierapolis nor the enemies' army manage to discover.

(Procop. *Wars* 2.6.7–8)

This description of the reaction by a leading Roman commander in the east to Khusro's invasion of Syria in 540 represents a familiar vision of the reduced military capacity of the late Roman army, a force whose paper strength could not be mobilized to defend imperial territory and whose considerable cost produced results such as the sack of Amida in 359, as the *comes sacrarum largitionum* (imperial treasurer) Ursulus sarcastically commented (Amm. Marc. 20.11.5). Roman generals and armies supposedly lost confidence in their ability to defeat enemies, with the result that containment might become a primary objective: Roman forces turned to guerrilla tactics while cities drew on their own wealth to purchase temporary salvation.

This negative view of the late Roman ability to fight appears to be corroborated by the simple fact that the armies which had for centuries dominated their neighbours found it increasingly difficult to hold frontiers and suffered a number of defeats: that the western Empire ceased to exist as different tribal groups forcibly established their authority over different provinces, while the east lost most of its territory after its army had been annihilated at the Yarmuk in 636, demonstrated a shift in the balance of military power. If the end result is incontrovertible, the process by which it was reached and the explanations should not be prejudged. Thus, although the inaction of Buzes appears to be paralleled by that of Magnus on the

eastern front in 573 (John of Epiphania 5), while in the Balkans the escape of Ildigisal in 552 (Procop. *Wars* 8.27.1–18) or the advance of Zabergan across a deserted countryside in 558/9 (Agathias 5.11.6) suggest a similar picture of military weakness, it is wrong to write off Roman forces even in the latter part of the sixth century: in the 580s the Romans won two substantial battles against the Persians (Monocarton, 582; Solachon, 586), and in 599 a series of victories against the Avars rocked even these mighty enemies and demonstrated Roman tactical superiority (Theophyl. Sim. 8.2.8–8.4.1).

The Roman capacity for recovery is illustrated by the contrast between the ‘crisis’ of the third century when the empire came close to fragmentation and the situation in the early fourth century when the Romans were in the ascendant on all frontiers. Any impression that the Romans had lost the military initiative and had resorted entirely to a passive or reactionary mode of operation can be challenged by considering the conflicts of Justinian’s reign: analysis of the eastern or Danube frontiers would indeed suggest a reactive mentality, but this has to be balanced against the major undertakings in the west whose demands can be seen as the explanation for defensive behaviour elsewhere. A similar broad view needs to be taken of Constantius II’s eastern strategy, where the emperor remained substantially on the defensive throughout the twenty-four years of his reign with only one pitched battle being fought (Singara, 344) and the other major engagements consisting of sieges of Roman frontier positions.⁵⁴ But repeated internal problems and the needs of the Danube frontier distracted the emperor, as can be deduced even from the unfavourable presentation of his actions in Ammianus,⁵⁵ and his defensiveness was sandwiched between bouts of extreme aggression, unfulfilled in the case of Constantine who died in 337 at the start of an eastern campaign to bring Christianity to Persia and unsuccessful for Julian in 363.

The Roman military machine was cumbersome, especially if the emperor was personally involved, as the detailed arrangements for the arrival in Egypt of Diocletian reveal,⁵⁶ but the machine was designed to move. Troops were trained to march, both at the standard rate of 20 Roman miles (about 30 km) and at the full pace of 24 miles in five hours, as well as at running and jumping (Veg. *Mil.* 1.9). Military handbooks paid attention to marching order, with different arrangements indicated for different conditions and threats, and emphasized the importance of reconnaissance (e.g. Veg. *Mil.* 3.6; Maurice, *Strat.* 9.3–4). Thorough preparation was advised: the sensible general

⁵⁴ Warmington (1977); Hunt (1998) 13–14.

⁵⁵ Matthews (1989a) ch. 3.

⁵⁶ Skeat (1964).

should have itineraries of all regions in which war is being waged written out in the fullest detail, so that he may learn the distances between places by the number of miles and the quality of roads, and examine short-cuts, by-ways, mountains and rivers accurately described. Indeed the more conscientious generals reportedly had itineraries of the provinces in which the emergency occurred not just annotated but illustrated as well, so that they could choose their route when setting out by the visual aspect as well as by mental calculation.

(Veg. *Mil.* 3.6)

This quotation, which recalls at a tactical level the more strategic discussions of Constantine quoted above, illustrates the importance for military movement of the road network, and its upkeep is one of the less visible factors in the maintenance of Roman power: milestones were no longer inscribed to record the regular repair of this infrastructure, and literary sources only rarely attest more major contributions such as Justinian's bridge over the Sangarius (fig. 9.4) and roads and bridges in Cilicia (Procop. *Build.* 5.3.8–11, 5.5). Roads had to be kept open and the wayside stations manned and supplied: one of the consequences of the Slav migrations into the Balkans was the gradual choking of travel as tribal groups and bandits attacked travellers; Justinian responded with the construction of forts, such as that at Adina in Scythia on the route from Marcianopolis to the Danube (Procop. *Build.* 4.7.13), but even official travel might still be disrupted and important routes fell out of use (Men. Prot. fr. 15.6; Theophyl. Sim. 8.4.3–5).⁵⁷ This passage of Vegetius also points to the crucial role of information in securing military success,⁵⁸ information which had to be denied to the enemy, as Constantine well recognized (Const. Porph. *Three Treatises* B.22–6; cf. Veg. *Mil.* 3.6), as well as acquired by the Romans.

Not all campaigns involved pitched battles, sometimes because the Romans were reluctant to commit themselves if conditions did not appear favourable, as Buzes decided in 540, but more often because their enemies did not wish to confront the full might of a Roman army.⁵⁹ In the first Persian War of Justinian's reign there were three major battles, at Dara and Satala in 530 when the Persians, encouraged by minor successes in previous years, unsuccessfully threatened frontier fortresses, and at Callinicum in 531 when Belisarius, whose army was now more confident, opposed the retreat of an invasion force.⁶⁰ The two victories of 530 had been secured at engagements when the proximity of a major fortification offered security to the Romans, but Roman overconfidence may have been a factor in the defeat at Callinicum. Anastasius' Persian War offers a contrast since, although there were several minor engagements and major sieges at Amida and Edessa, there was no clash of the main armies, which were of very substantial size:⁶¹

⁵⁷ Cf. Whitby (1988) 71. ⁵⁸ Cf. pp. 252–3 above.

⁵⁹ For further discussion of battles and more limited forms of combat, see pp. 350, 354 below.

⁶⁰ For details see Greatrex (1998) pt III. ⁶¹ Discussion in Greatrex (1998) pt. II.



Figure 9.4 Sangarius bridge, c. AD 560.

the main Persian objective was booty, while the Romans were concerned to limit damage by confining Persian ravaging as close to the frontier as possible and to persuade Kavadh to discuss peace by raids into his territory. Circumstances, usually local but sometimes strategic, dictated the methods of conflict used. In Africa in 533 it was expedient for Belisarius to engage the Vandals since a speedy battle allowed him to defeat them before they had gathered their full forces and spared his army a potentially demoralizing siege of Carthage. In Italy by contrast the reconquest progressed by siege and countersiege, and important battles were reserved for the very end of the long campaign when the Goths under Totila and Teias had to confront the superior army of Narses in a bid to prevent his inexorable reassertion of Roman control across the peninsula. If, however, objectives could be achieved without risking battle, the results could be just as creditable for the general: in 542 Belisarius was able to cut short Khusro's ravaging in Syria by threatening his line of retreat, a strategy which Procopius presented very favourably (*Wars* 2.21; cf. Maurice, *Strat.* 8.B.4).

Sieges are prominent in accounts of late Roman warfare,⁶² which reflects an increase in their military significance. In part this responded to the nature of warfare and of frontier organization. In the east the regularity of Persian aggression led to improvements in the fortifications of major sites

⁶² E.g. Amida in 359 (Amm. Marc. 18.9–19.8); Rome in 537 (Procop. *Wars* 5.17–6.10); Edessa in 544 (Procop. *Wars* 2.26–7; Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.27); Constantinople in 626 (*Chron. Pasch.* 716–26; Georg. Pis. *Bellum Avaricum*; Theodore Syncellus' homily). See further pp. 359–62 below.

in the more exposed provinces, and the development of some strategic military positions such as Amida under Constantius II, Dara under Anastasius and Citharizon under Justinian. As a result if the Persians were to secure significant booty, or to gain territory as they were attempting in the fourth century, they had to tackle the urban defences which protected movable wealth and dominated the surrounding land. Some places even developed a personal significance for individuals, becoming a challenge which they could not avoid: Nisibis appears to have acquired this status for Shapur II, Edessa certainly did for Khusro I who was determined to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the Christian God by capturing the city whose safety He had guaranteed, and perhaps Dara too because of its location and the history of its construction. In the west the lesser technical and logistical capacity of Rome's enemies produced fewer sustained sieges, until the advent of the Huns and their assault on places like Naissus, but the Justinianic reconquest of Italy focused around siege and countersiege because secure control of the landscape was vital for both sides.

Agricultural devastation could be a powerful weapon, especially against societies whose capacity to produce and preserve surpluses was limited: in 358 an Alamannic leader was excused from supplying grain to the Romans since his territory had been so seriously ravaged, while in 368 the interruption to commerce compounded the difficulties which prompted the Terwingi to negotiate with Valens (Amm. Marc. 17.10.9, 27.5.7; cf. 18.2.19).⁶³ Even in the east the impact was occasionally significant: Agathias claimed that Khusro I's despair at the sight of Maurice's ravaging of Arzanene led to his death (4.29.7–10), and the loss of agricultural wealth and prestige prompted rulers to negotiate, for example in 507 and 578.⁶⁴ Effective ravaging, however, did take time and, although it directly benefited the troops, this could also detract from the overall objectives of an expedition, as Valentinian experienced in 372 during a raid to snatch the Alamannic leader Macrianus:

but he was prevented by the continuous noise made by his men; for although he constantly commanded them to abstain from plundering and setting fires, he could not make them obey. For the crackling flames and the dissonant shouts awakened the king's attendants' (Amm. Marc. 29.4.5)

The Romans suffered just as much. In the third century a swathe of provinces along the Rhine frontier was devastated and the term *agri deserti* appeared in the law codes and panegyrics. In 449 Attila demanded the creation of a strip of no man's land to the south of the Danube five days' journey wide, and in 479 emperor Zeno could offer Theoderic the Amal the

⁶³ On the Alamanni, see Matthews (1989a) 310–16; on the Goths, Heather (1991) 117–21.

⁶⁴ Greatrex (1998) 114; Whitby (1988) 270–1. Agathias may well have exaggerated the impact of Maurice's actions.



Figure 9.5 Relief depicting the battle of the Milvian Bridge from the arch of Constantine, Rome.

option of settling his followers in the vicinity of Pautalia, in the spacious, beautiful, fertile but deserted province of Dardania (*Pan. Lat.* 8.21; Priscus fr. 11.1.7–14; Malchus fr. 20.48–9, 201–4).

Civil wars are a special case with regard to battles and sieges, since the basis for the conflict usually meant that the adversaries had to settle the dispute as promptly and decisively as possible: troops had been withdrawn from frontiers which might not remain peaceful for long, and the personal nature of the competition also led to a formal confrontation. Thus in 312, whereas Maxentius might appear to have been better advised to have resisted Constantine from behind the walls of Rome, such action would have displayed a lack of confidence that would at once have weakened his own reputation and reinforced Constantine's somewhat uncertain position in the middle of his rival's territory (fig. 9.5). Occasionally legitimate emperors did delay their response to a challenge: in 361 Constantius chose to attend to the eastern frontier, although he was also making preparations against Julian; in 387 Theodosius I and in 421 Theodosius II waited at least a year before committing eastern troops against the western usurpers Magnus Maximus and John, probably because the usurper did not directly challenge their own position. However, the price of ignoring a challenge could be the enforced acceptance of a new imperial colleague, as the second tetrarchy had to do with Constantine or Honorius with Constantine III.

Civil war campaigns were often very bloody since even in defeat the losers would have little incentive to save themselves to fight another day: survivors would be disgraced outcasts, such as the 'brigand' Charietto who had supported Magnentius.⁶⁵ Engagements such as Mursa (351) and the

⁶⁵ *PLRE* 1.200, s.v. Charietto 1. For the early empire, see pp. 120–1 above.

Frigidus (393) were extremely expensive in manpower, and the latter in particular weakened the western armies so seriously that the damage was still being repaired a decade later when the upper Danube and Rhine frontiers came under severe pressure. Occasionally a contender might find his troops abandoning his cause, like Maximinus in 238; in 351 Constantius achieved a famous success through an oration, possibly stage-managed, to Vetrano's troops (Them. *Or.* 2.37a–c). Usurpation and consequent civil war were a much more serious problem for the western provinces than the east, where Procopius was quickly eliminated in 365/6 and the troubles of Zeno's reign, when Basiliscus took power in Constantinople in 475/6 and Marcian came close to capturing the palace in 479, were resolved without the clash of armies. Full-scale sieges in civil wars were rare, with Julian's protracted attack on Aquileia in 361/2 an exception: the circumstances were special, since the defenders knew that Constantius was preparing to march west, while Julian needed to secure this key position in northern Italy; the city held out until informed of Constantius' death (Amm. Marc. 22.8.49). In contrast to the waste of resources, commanders in civil wars might attempt to prevent their troops from ravaging what was in effect their own agricultural wealth: in 533 Belisarius extended this principle to protect the Roman farmers in Africa who would return to imperial control once the Vandals were removed (Procop. *Wars* 3.16.2–8). But civil war armies had to be supplied and it is unlikely that official exactions by the army which lost would be recognized by the victor.

Although fleets made a significant contribution to Roman military power, through defence of the Rhine and Danube frontiers by river flotillas and logistical support, there were very few campaigns which could be characterized as naval, primarily because Roman enemies rarely possessed significant fleets of their own.⁶⁶ By far the most important naval encounters occurred in civil wars, the defeat of Licinius in the Bosphorus in 324 and the failure of Vitalian's attempt on Constantinople in 515 when Greek fire was used to destroy his ships (Malalas 16.6 Thurn = 403.5–406.8 Dindorf). In the 250s and 260s Gothic groups north of the Black Sea gained control of local fleets and rapidly became proficient at raiding, but their motley collection of fishing vessels, merchantmen, rafts and naval boats was always vulnerable to challenge by a proper fleet.⁶⁷ Carausius and Allectus in Britain were a more formidable threat, since they had taken over the imperial Saxon shore fleet, and their suppression by Constantius in 293–6 entailed a substantial naval expedition (*Pan. Lat.* 8.11–19). The Vandal capture of Carthage gave them control of Roman shipping and led to the first serious challenge to imperial domination of the Mediterranean since the Punic Wars of the Republic, but their main activity was ravaging; even

⁶⁶ Cf. pp. 358–9 below. ⁶⁷ Wolfram (1988) 48–56.

the massive expeditions dispatched from Constantinople in 468 and 533 passed off without confrontation at sea, the former being disrupted by fire ships at Syracuse and the latter arriving when the Vandal ships were busy off Sardinia. In the east it was feared that Persian access to the Black Sea would permit them to develop a fleet and threaten Constantinople (Procop. *Wars* 2.28.23), but when the Persians did eventually capture Phoenicia and Egypt in the seventh century they did not exploit what maritime resources fell into their hands: at Constantinople in 626 the Persians relied on Slav canoes to ferry them across the Bosphorus (*Chron. Pasch.* 722.14–723.12). The Slavs were effective raiders, but their light ships were no match for proper Roman vessels, as the engagement in the Golden Horn in 626 demonstrated (Theodore Syncellus 311.7–312.5; Georg. Pis. *Bellum Avaricum* 441–74). It was left to the Arabs to create a powerful fleet, in spite of the reluctance of the Caliph ‘Umar and their inexperience of maritime matters;⁶⁸ the development was as striking as the emergence of the Roman navy during the First Punic War.

Generalship was clearly a factor in all types of campaign. During the third century the recurrent challenges, both internal and external, ensured a supply of competent commanders of whom only the ablest and luckiest survived; the senatorial amateurs of earlier periods were no longer appointed. But imperial stabilization by the tetrarchy prompted a partial return to the determination of appointment by non-military considerations. Influence at court was a factor of which Ammianus complained bitterly (e.g. 15.5.18–19, 20.2), especially as his patron Ursicinus appeared to suffer discrimination, and kinship also now mattered⁶⁹ – sometimes kinship with the dominant military figure at court, so that one can trace a fifth-century eastern nexus focused on Aspar, at other times kinship with the emperor. Reliability and loyalty were among the key criteria for senior posts,⁷⁰ although the ability to organize resources and impose discipline were also regarded as important qualities (e.g. Maurice, *Strat.* 8.A.3, 30, 8.B.19, 27, 99). Actual fighting was only one part of a commander’s role, and there was relatively little that any general could do after an engagement had begun – though the timing of the deployment of reserves to threatened sections of the line at Strasbourg (357) and Casilinum (554) was crucial. Personal bravery and individual prowess, of the sort which Areobindus displayed in 421, were a bonus, but since commanders were not expected to be in the thick of fighting these were not essential; personal involvement might lead to misfortune, as the deaths of emperor Julian and the *magister* Mundus (535) illustrate. It was always accepted that the essential elements of good generalship could be learned, and works such as Maurice’s *Strategicon* offered the necessary tuition. Drawing on the lessons

⁶⁸ Kaegi (1992) 246, 248.

⁶⁹ Matthews (1989a) 35–6, 274–7.

⁷⁰ Cf. Kaegi (1981) ch. 3.

of the past was important, and Philippicus and Heraclius are both praised in this respect (Theophyl. Sim. 1.14.3).⁷¹ Good education undoubtedly played a part in Julian's surprisingly successful career as a young commander, while there is more substance to Eunapius' criticism of Valens' lack of education as a factor in his defeat at Adrianople (fr. 44) than a sceptical modern observer might suppose: a well-educated person might not have succumbed to the pressures which led Valens to a rapid engagement, or might have considered the possibility that only part of the Gothic forces was visible on the plain. Among the basic tenets of the *Strategicon* was that generals should be suspicious, take thought for the future, expect the unexpected and be well versed in all aspects of military knowledge (8.B.47, 55, 63, 98).

How many really good generals there were in antiquity is difficult to say. Belisarius might appear to qualify on the basis of his victory at Dara (530), the Vandal conquest and the initial Gothic campaigns, but at Callinicum (531) he proved incapable of restraining the enthusiasm of his troops and he was less effective in the 540s. Sabinianus was highly regarded by Marcellinus Comes (s.a. 481.2), but we do not have enough information to corroborate his assessment. Constantine's sequence of civil war and external successes indicates that he was talented, but we lack detailed descriptions of his various engagements. The eunuch Narses stands out as a good organizer, strict disciplinarian and clever tactician, though he was also helped by the provision of substantial resources which had been denied to Belisarius in Italy during the 540s. One factor which complicated the achievements of even the best commanders was the reluctance of emperors to accord supreme authority to any individual. Narses in Italy was exceptional in this respect, as was Maurice on the eastern frontier in 578–82, but the sort of wrangling which distracted Belisarius in Italy or the Anastasian generals in Mesopotamia was more typical (e.g. Procop. *Wars* 6.18.3–29, 6.21.16–42, 1.8.20). This has plausibly been identified as, at least in part, a deliberate practice which emperors tolerated to avoid the dangers of unlimited military power.⁷² Of course when emperors campaigned in person this was not an issue, at least in their own sphere of operations.

VI. RELIGION AND WAR

A papyrus discovered at Dura-Europus in a temple which served as the archive for the twentieth Cohort of Palmyrenes preserves a military calendar of festivals:

⁷¹ Heraclius: Kaegi (1992) 63.

⁷² Kaegi (1981) 30–3; cf. pp. 397–8 below.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 12 May | For the circus races in honour of Mars, to Father Mars the Avenger, a bull. |
| 21 May | Because the divine Severus was acclaimed <i>imperator</i> . . . to the divine Pius Severus. |
| 24 May | For the birthday of Germanicus Caesar, a supplication to the memory of Germanicus Caesar. |
| 31 May | For the Rose Festival of the standards, a supplication. |
| 9 June | For the Festival of Vesta, to Mother Vesta, a supplication. |
| 26 June | Because our lord Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander was acclaimed Caesar and was clothed in the toga of manhood, to the <i>genius</i> of Alexander Augustus, a bull. |

The entries record the celebrations of traditional Roman deities alongside commemorations for legitimate emperors from Augustus (birthday celebrated on 23 September) to the current ruler Alexander Severus (26 June) as well as for associates such as Germanicus (24 May); the calendar was produced in the late 220s, so some of the imperial festivals date back two centuries.⁷³ This document powerfully demonstrates the significance of traditional Latin religion in structuring the lives of Roman soldiers, which was particularly relevant in a unit largely recruited from eastern provincials, and in binding their allegiance to the current emperor. Soldiers and officers regularly sacrificed and set up inscriptions to thank their chosen gods for success in battle or just survival through to retirement age. The corollary of such gratitude was the fear that failure and defeat reflected divine anger at some lapse or misdemeanour, to be rectified by additional or purified ceremonies and exclusion of non-participants.

Thus it was war which prompted both the great Christian persecutions of the third century and the decisive imperial patronage for the new religion in the fourth. Decius, who had defeated the invading Goths in the Balkans and then overthrown Philip the Arab, entered the temple of Capitoline Jupiter in Rome on 3 January 250 to present the traditional imperial prayers for the year, but this 'restorer of sacred rites'⁷⁴ also instructed that his example be followed in the capitols of all cities throughout the empire. Tertullian had claimed that Christians did their religious duty by praying to the true God for a peaceful empire and brave armies (*Apol.* 30.4; cf. Origen, *C. Cels.* 8.73), but on this occasion public participation in the ceremonies was necessary: Christians could bend their principles and superficially conform, evade the challenge by withdrawing from cities, or accept martyrdom. Success in battle demonstrated that a general or emperor prayed to the right divinities: Aurelian advertised his connection with *sol invictus*, the unconquered sun,

⁷³ Campbell (1994) no. 207, the most accessible substantial translation.

⁷⁴ *AE* 1973. 63 no. 235.

while Diocletian and Maximian were linked with ‘Jupiter, ruler of the heavens, and Hercules, pacifier of the earth’ (*Pan. Lat.* 10.11.6). In keeping with this tradition the usurper Constantine proclaimed his allegiance to a new God when preparing for battle outside Rome against Maxentius in 312.⁷⁵

Constantine was advised in a dream to mark the heavenly sign of God on the shields of his soldiers and then engage in battle. He did as he was commanded and by means of a slanted letter X with the top of its head bent round, he marked Christ on their shields. Armed with this sign, the army took up its weapons.

(Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 44.5)

Eusebius, writing two decades later, after Constantine’s death, developed the story so that the emperor and his entourage saw a midday vision of ‘a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which read, “By this conquer”’ (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1.28).⁷⁶ The clash of Licinius and Maximinus was also presented as a religious confrontation, with victory going to Licinius after he ordered his army to offer a prayer he had received from an angelic vision:

Supreme God, we beseech thee; holy God we beseech thee. We commend all justice to thee, we commend our safety to thee, we commend our empire to thee. Through thee we live, through thee we emerge victorious and fortunate. Supreme, holy God, hear our prayers; we stretch our arms to thee; hearken, holy, supreme God.

(Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 46)

The usurpation of Eugenius developed in 393, under the influence of its military leader Arbogast, into a pagan challenge to the Christian empire of Theodosius, and old rites were resurrected to support the cause; Theodosius stressed his role as Christian protector, praying at the church of the Baptist at the Hebdomon outside Constantinople and again during the hard-fought battle of the Frigidus (Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 7.22, 24).⁷⁷

Throughout late antiquity the connection of correct worship and victory remained vital, to the extent that the traditional celebration of a triumph came to be replaced by ceremonies in church:⁷⁸ Maurice marked a victory with a vigil in Hagia Sophia, while Heraclius had the dispatch proclaiming his victory over Khusro II, which was couched in explicitly Christian language, read out from the pulpit of the same church (Theophyl. Sim. 6.8.8; *Chron. Pasch.* 727.15ff.). Military action was preceded by appropriate rites: bishop Epiphanius of Constantinople prayed for the Vandal expedition in 533 and placed a recently baptized soldier on the ships (Procop. *Wars* 3.12.2), while before the battle of Solachon in 586 general Philippicus paraded an

⁷⁵ Lane Fox (1986) 609–21; cf. pp. 262–4 above.

⁷⁶ For discussion of the versions see Cameron and Hall (1999) 204–13.

⁷⁷ Williams and Friell (1994) 129–33. ⁷⁸ McCormick (1986).

icon of Christ through the ranks and then entrusted it to a local bishop for the duration of the conflict (Theophyl. Sim. 2.3.4–9). The generals Narses and John Troglita were both known for their piety, which was believed to contribute to their victories (Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.*, 4.24; Corippus, *Iohannis* 7.84–103, 8.212–31). Soldiers would chant the *Kyrie eleison* and *Deus nobiscum* (Lord have mercy; God with us) on marching out of camp on the day of battle (Maurice, *Strat.* 2.18.13–23), and in battle the Virgin Mary might serve as password (Theophyl. Sim. 5.10.4).

One important aspect of religion in war was the maintenance of civilian morale. In crises the empire's inhabitants naturally turned to their gods for reassurance, as the people of Stratonicea in Caria did when worried about Gothic raids in the third century:

Oracle of Zeus Panemerios. The city, under the instructions also of Sarapis, asks through Philokalos, *oikonomos*, whether the sacrilegious barbarians will attack the city or its territory in the coming year. The god gave his oracle. I see that you are troubled but am unable to understand the cause for this. For I have arranged neither to give your city for sacking nor to make it slave from free nor to deprive it of any other of its good things.⁷⁹

Four centuries later the people of Thessalonica received similar reassurance from their patron saint, when an *illustris* received a dream in which Demetrius refused an order to abandon his people even though his Master had condemned the city to be captured (*Miracula S. Demetrii* 166–71).⁸⁰ Edessa, 'The Blessed City', was guaranteed protection first by Christ's letter to Abgar and then by the *acheiropoietos* (not-made-by-human-hand) icon of Christ; this special dispensation both challenged Persians to capture the city and inspired the inhabitants to participate enthusiastically in its defence.⁸¹ Bishops, whose status as major property-owners and patrons made them leading figures in local society,⁸² provided vital leadership in time of war (fig. 9.6). The first book of the *Miracles* of Demetrius was composed by Bishop John when Thessalonica was under threat from Slavs and Avars in the early seventh century; emperor Maurice wrote to pope Gregory to obtain his consent to the illegal deposition of a demented bishop of Justiniana Prima for fear that the city might fall to the enemy while it lacked episcopal guidance (Gregory, *Register Epistolarum* II.29); during the siege of Amida in 502/3 the death of Bishop John was a factor in the city's fall, 'For there was no bishop in that city to be their teacher and to keep them in order' (Zach. *Hist. eccl.* 7.3).

Christianity was predominantly seen as a religion of war, led by a God of Battles with a range of fighting prototypes in the Old Testament such as Joshua and David. Even before the conversion of Constantine it is clear

⁷⁹ Laumonier (1934). ⁸⁰ See Whitby (1998) 201–7.

⁸¹ Whitby (1998) 198–200, (2000e) 225–8, 323–6.

⁸² For episcopal power, see Brown (1992) ch. 3.



Figure 9.6 Mosaic of St Demetrius as protector of his city, with arms around the bishop and governor. Thessalonica, church of St Demetrius.

that Christians served in the armies, presumably roughly in proportion to their numbers in the general (or rural) population: a martyr like Marcellus was a senior centurion, and so had probably served for several years, before something prompted him to force his religious beliefs on the attention of his superiors (*Acts of Marcellus* 2–3); many serving Christians felt no need to imitate such attention seekers (*Acts of Maximilian* 2.8).⁸³ After Constantine's conversion worship was regularized, with time off for services and chaplains attached to individual units (Theodoret, *Ep.* 11). However,

⁸³ Discussion in Ubina (2000) 386–411.

the pacific tendency in Christianity with which we are more familiar was also evident in antiquity.⁸⁴ The future St Martin of Tours was handed over, contrary to his religious inclinations, by his father in response to an edict requiring the sons of veterans to enlist (Sulpicius Severus, *Vit. Mart.* 2). Augustine of Hippo found it necessary to argue in favour of military service as a defence of general peace and security, developing the notion of the just war:

No one must ever question the justness of a war waged on God's command . . . God commands war to expel, crush or subdue the pride of mortals. Enduring war exercises the patience of His saints, humbles them and helps them to accept His fatherly correction.' (contra *Faustum* 22.75)

Basil of Caesarea rebuked suffragan bishops for accepting for ordination men who wanted to evade conscription, and even expelled recent ordinands until each case was examined on its merits (*Ep.* 54). Although in theory religious convictions might offer an escape from enlistment (*Cod. Theod.* 7.20.12.2), clergy were impressed during crises, as when Maurice struggled to create an army to defend the Balkans (Mich. Syr. 10.21).

VII. EPILOGUE

War shaped the existence of the Roman empire, determined its decline and conditioned the nature of post-Roman structures. In the west the tribal kingdoms which progressively took over Roman territory during the fifth century were units bound together by successful fighting;⁸⁵ surviving Roman populations might gain in security and influence their new rulers in cultural and religious spheres, but war was the prerogative of the new tribal élite and such Romans as chose to adapt themselves to their ways. In the east Islamic invaders occupied Persian and Roman territories as conquerors whose privileges were guaranteed by their inscription on the *diwan*, the provincial list of those entitled to monthly payments from tax revenues.⁸⁶ The Byzantine rump of the Roman empire reorganized itself to channel resources to the support of frontier armies, especially in Anatolia,⁸⁷ and predictable questions were asked about the empire's religious practices: when Pergamum was besieged by the Arabs in 717 the defenders allegedly resorted to human sacrifice (Theophanes, *Chron.* 390, AM 6208), while more generally, Islamic rejection of images fuelled imperial iconoclasm at Constantinople.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ For the general tendency of the Church to be less radical in practice than theory, see Garnsey and Humfress (2001) ch. 9.

⁸⁵ See Ward-Perkins (2005) for powerful rebuttal of arguments for 'accommodation'.

⁸⁶ Kennedy (1995). ⁸⁷ Haldon (1990a). ⁸⁸ Mango (1980) 98–9.

CHAPTER 10

BATTLE

PHILIP RANCE

The army that the emperor Heraclius led to victory against the Persians in the 620s undoubtedly differed in composition and appearance from the army with which Constantine restored imperial unity in the 320s,¹ but perceptions of the nature and pace of change over these three centuries must be balanced by an awareness of fundamental continuities in the combat operations of the Roman army. This period has long been characterized rather simplistically as the dawning of a new age of 'medieval' warfare, when armoured horsemen came to dominate the battlefields of Europe and the Near East. The Gothic victory at Adrianople in 378 traditionally heads the chronology of this development, but has itself been the subject of considerable reinterpretation.² Recent studies have stressed the very gradual nature of this transformation, which was one of changing roles and emphases rather than revolutionary innovation, and which was only profound towards the very close of this era. As with the army of the Principate, however, scholarship has generally concentrated on aspects of the late Roman army other than its performance in combat, the supreme test of any military organization's effectiveness and arguably its primary function. Emotive perceptions of 'decline and fall' continue therefore to mould modern assessments, and inefficiency, indiscipline and low morale are charges regularly levelled against late Roman soldiers, often in the context of their perceived ethnic heterogeneity and 'barbarization'. The persistent application of the term 'Byzantine' to eastern Roman armies in the fifth and sixth centuries is also unhelpful, by separating the military and political fate of the western Empire and creating a false impression of discontinuity in late antique military practices.³ These are important considerations in evaluating the capabilities of late Roman armies and the nature and diversity of combat in which they participated. Ultimately, it is necessary to assess those factors which distinguished Roman armies from their various opponents: the tactical roles of the different troops deployed; their training, discipline

¹ See ch. 8 in this volume. ² Burns (1973); Nicasie (1998) 233–56.

³ Note the very western perspective and fifth-century terminus of recent surveys: Southern and Dixon (1996); Richardot (1998b); Le Bohec (2006); Whitby (2004) discusses empire-wide changes in the third and fourth centuries.

and morale; and whether their attitudes to and preparation for combat were equal to the operational tasks they faced.

I. THE THEORY OF COMBAT: MILITARY TREATISES

Like their predecessors, later Roman emperors and officers embarking on military operations had at their disposal a number of military treatises or *tactica*. These texts are important but problematic sources for late Roman military theory and practice, and reveal varied contemporary perceptions of the capabilities of Roman armies. Their existence expresses a particular approach towards theoretical preparation for combat that continued to distinguish the Romans from their opponents; only the Persians produced comparable texts.⁴ Earlier works of this genre continued to be read, excerpted and paraphrased, but from the fourth century several new treatises were produced both in Latin and Greek. Previous works tended to be specialized monographs on siege machinery, encampments or the late Hellenistic phalanx; the lost treatise on military engineering ascribed to the emperor Julian (361–3) demonstrates continuity in this tradition.⁵ The most representative form of late antique *tactica*, however, was a broad compendium, which variously discussed equipment and training, battles and field operations, and fortifications and sieges. They are also marked by a distinctly more cautious attitude to pitched battle, which remained the most important aspect of strategy, with the greatest potential for decisive victory, but also the most dangerous of military endeavours, ordinarily not to be undertaken without the advantage of numbers, position or surprise. In a period characterized by defensive strategy and low-intensity warfare associated with the on-going maintenance of imperial security, the dangers of defeat in a large-scale action far outweighed the benefits of victory. ‘Risk’ (*periculum*, *kindunos*), therefore, has an entirely pejorative sense in their vocabulary, while ‘opportunity’ (*opportunitas*, *kairos*) is their watchword. They increasingly accentuate the importance of various *ruses de guerre* in creating favourable conditions for battle, or even as preferred alternatives to a general engagement; victory by such means was no less glorious and much less dangerous.⁶ The ideal late Roman commander therefore engineered advantages and opportunities through various stratagems in order to realize the full potential of Roman troops in combat.

Later Roman *tactica* pose two main questions of interpretation: first, the extent to which a text describes existing military practices or proposes future reforms or outlines an ideal rarely met in reality. Second is the degree

⁴ Inostrancev (1926); Kollautz (1985) 120–32; Hamblin (1986). ⁵ John Lydus, *Mag.* 1.47.

⁶ Veg. *Mil.* 3.6, 9–11, 22; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 33, 39–40; Maurice, *Strat.* 2.5, 4, 7.A.11–12, 9.1–2, 10.2.

to which its contents truly reflect contemporary circumstances or merely rework earlier treatises, though essential continuities in many aspects of ancient warfare often permitted an author to re-use much older material without compromising the practical utility of his text, and even the more original works combine contemporary practices with traditional material. The authors differed in their knowledge and authority, ranging from veteran senior officers to 'armchair generals' and courtiers devoid of military experience; some works were clearly officially sponsored, others personal musings. In style they range from the plain vernacular replete with technical terminology to a classicizing idiom. These stylistic differences can be deceptive – the continued interest in traditional treatments of the late Hellenistic phalanx is not as absurdly archaic as is often assumed, but relates to topical concerns for well-ordered infantry and their contemporary deployment in relatively inflexible compact formations. It is also true, however, that the genre, by accommodating a tradition of antiquarianism, maintained an interest in earlier military 'classics' more for intellectual and cultural reasons than for their practical value.

The degree to which *tactica* were read and their precepts applied is difficult to determine, and it would be easy to exaggerate the didactic element of such 'manuals', at least in the modern sense of systematic self-tuition. Their continued composition and adaptation, and their recommendation by ancient authors, suggest that, along with collections of historical *exempla*, they at least served as useful guidelines to readers and in some cases 'codified' regulations or general principles to be adapted to circumstances. As often well-planned and logically structured works of reference they were an adjunct to military training and experience, though by no means a substitute. Their contemporary value has been questioned, but the utility of each treatise needs to be considered on its individual merits and in light of the author's purpose, rather than judged by the conventions of what is a broad genre.

The *Epitoma rei militaris* of Publius (Flavius) Vegetius Renatus is a unique example of a general military treatise in Latin.⁷ Its author was a *vir illustris* and *comes*, a high-ranking civilian bureaucrat, who also wrote the equine veterinary treatise *Digesta artis mulomedicinae*. The *Epitoma* was written and dedicated to an unnamed emperor at a much-disputed point between 383 and 450, with a date in the reign of Theodosius I (379–95) preferred here.⁸ To some extent the problematic character of the work's purpose, content and sources makes its precise date unimportant; what is required is an appreciation of Vegetius' aims. The *Epitoma* is wide ranging, its four

⁷ Reeve (2004); Milner (1996).

⁸ Barnes (1979); Goffart (1977); Sabbah (1980); Zuckerman (1994c); Milner (1996) xxxi–xlii; Richardot (1998a).

books covering respectively recruitment and training; organization and deployment; field operations and tactics; siegecraft and, briefly, naval warfare. It is nevertheless not a comprehensive study of contemporary warfare, but a critically selective epitome. Vegetius restricts his interests to those areas he deems in need of reform; he expressly neglects cavalry, for example, on the grounds that 'present practice suffices' (1.20, 3.26). His primary concern is to remedy the deficiencies he perceives in contemporary field armies, notably unsuitable recruits and laxity in training, and he is particularly polemical on the enlistment of barbarians as both a source and indication of Roman military weakness.

Typically for the genre, Vegetius addresses his proposals to the emperor, and books II to IV enjoyed imperial patronage following a favourable response to book I. He advocates a return to the traditional methods of recruitment, training and deployment that had made Rome great. He bases his reforming programme on selected earlier practices culled from ancient authors, partially modified in accordance with later developments and contemporary vocabulary. His model for military organization is the 'ancient legion', *antiqua legio* (2.4–18), to some extent Vegetius' own construct using Republican and earlier imperial sources, probably known imperfectly through later epitomes, and elaborated by his historical speculations and etymological deductions. Much of the *Epitoma*, therefore, is not a description of the contemporary army, but rather a prescription for the army as wished for, and this from an essentially civilian and amateur, albeit well-informed, perspective. There is much of contemporary utility in the treatise, more so in books III and IV; indeed the generality of the work accounts for its long-term popularity with medieval and Renaissance readers.⁹ A significant part, however, is undoubtedly 'antiquarian', albeit antiquarianism of method rather than an end in itself; Vegetius certainly intended his work to be of contemporary value. This characterization of Vegetius' *Epitoma* as a 'blueprint' for reform, combined with the complex nature of its sources, makes identifying genuinely late Roman practices in its various chronological and textual strata very problematic.

The anonymous *De rebus bellicis* is a short treatise produced in the mid-fourth century, probably in the reigns of Valentinian I (364–75) and Valens (364–78).¹⁰ The author proposes improvements to the imperial defences, some emphasizing existing practices and equipment, others advocating new machines and devices, often of dubious practicality. The work falls into a category of amateur compositions, often seeking victory through technological innovation, which were addressed to imperial incumbents

⁹ Richardot (1998b).

¹⁰ Thompson (1952); Hassall and Ireland (1979); Wiedemann (1979); Liebeschuetz (1994), though note Brandt (1988) for arguments for a later date.

and sought as much to express intellectual pretensions and curry favour at court as to offer practical advice. A similar work is the *Epitedeuma* of Urbicius, an important figure at the Constantinopolitan court. This *opusculum* proposes to the emperor Anastasius (491–518) a type of *cheval-de-frise* designed to bolster Roman infantry; there is no evidence that this device was ever employed, though it is not dissimilar in function to the prefabricated giant caltrops and *ericius* or ‘hedgehog’ attested from the first century BC to the second century AD.¹¹ The *Epitedeuma* was originally appended to another short text by Urbicius, the *Tacticon*, an abbreviated summary of Arrian’s treatment of the Hellenistic phalanx (c. 136). Urbicius’, albeit amateur, interest in effective infantry deployment and fieldworks is nevertheless of contemporary relevance.¹²

To Syrianus Magister must be ascribed ‘three’ military treatises preserved separately in the manuscript tradition, which have long remained ‘anonymous’ and/or unconnected, despite studies since the eighteenth century maintaining their textual unity.¹³ These are elements of an extensive and well-structured compendium which treats all branches of military science. The largest section, hitherto ascribed to ‘Sixth-Century Anonymous’, and known by the modern title *Peri strategikes* or *De re strategica*, broadly covers land warfare.¹⁴ It includes provisions for the construction and defence of fortified sites, as well as field operations, weaponry and training, notably the insertion of an earlier treatise on archery. Syrianus’ discussion of tactics is in part a selective reworking of Aelian’s *Tactica Theoria* (c. 106–13), but specifically where he considers it of contemporary relevance. Such ‘phalangic’ deployment is less anachronistic than is often supposed, and Syrianus’ classifying idiom gives his work a deceptively archaic character. Another section of the compendium known as *Rhetorica militaris*, periodically ascribed to the same ‘Anonymous’, comprises examples of military speeches. It is unique to the tactical genre, though influenced by earlier rhetorical treatises.¹⁵ A third section devoted to naval warfare, usually entitled *Naumachica*, bears the ascription to an otherwise unknown ‘Syrianus Magister’, and is the only comprehensive treatment of naval warfare to survive from antiquity.¹⁶ Parts are manifestly based on earlier material, with descriptions of naval manoeuvres such as the *periplous* (9.24–7) and *diekplous* (9.35–40), as performed by classical triremes. These elements of Syrianus’ compendium have traditionally been dated to the reign of Justinian (527–65), though the evidence is far from compelling; the work may in fact date to any period between the mid-sixth and late ninth centuries, with some scholars now preferring to place it after the development of Arab naval power.¹⁷

¹¹ Gilliver (1993).

¹² *PLRE* 11.1190; *Epitedeuma*: Greatrex et al. (2005); *Tacticon*: Förster (1877) 467–71.

¹³ Most recently Zuckerman (1990); Cosentino (2000) 248–62. ¹⁴ Dennis (1985) 10–135.

¹⁵ Köchly (1855–6); Zuckerman (1990) 219–23. ¹⁶ Dain (1943) 43–55.

¹⁷ See especially Cosentino (2000) 262–80; Rance (2007b).

Syrianus' first-hand experience of warfare is disputed; though some have discerned a particular interest in engineering projects, a tenth-century description of his work as a 'historical book' is perhaps a better characterization of its literary milieu and cultural function.¹⁸

The *Strategicon* ascribed to the emperor Maurice (582–602) is an extremely important text in the history of late Roman warfare.¹⁹ This treatise discusses every aspect of contemporary land warfare, including organization, weaponry, training, battle tactics, stratagems and logistics. Its ethnographic excursions on the empire's varied enemies – Persians, 'Scythians', Germanic and Slavic peoples – are an innovation to the genre, which present four generic models of military deployment applicable to different circumstances, but also reflect the influence of foreign technology and practices on Roman equipment and tactics.²⁰ The *Strategicon* or 'Book of the General' is a work of outstanding utility, whose author combined, in deliberately simple Greek, earlier written material with practical military experience. It also reveals an acute understanding of the realities of combat and an insight into the psychological preoccupations of both generals and troops. The ascription to Maurice is doubted by some, but the *Strategicon* was undoubtedly sponsored by central government, in effect an official handbook rather than personal reflections, the first such imperial literary initiative.²¹ Although like other *tactica* it is often branded 'theoretical', overall the treatise offers a description of the late sixth-century army and its practices. Maurice seeks to rectify problems of poorly trained men and inexperienced officers not so much by reform or innovation as by codifying and explaining existing regulations, commands and procedures (pr. 10–17; 12.B.pr.). Where he describes ideal conditions he expresses an awareness that reality might sometimes be otherwise. The prescriptive element of the *Strategicon* is largely restricted to recommending the tactical flexibility of Avar cavalry, clearly based on lessons learned in Balkan campaigns of the 580s–590s (2.I, 4.5, 11.2). Maurice's primary concern to encourage better cavalry deployment and tactics has often been misinterpreted as further evidence for the contemporary redundancy of infantry, whose importance, on the contrary, he explicitly stresses.

Prima facie the *Strategicon* appears to be unrelated to earlier tactical literature and to describe a 'new' military system, a feature accentuated by its frequent labelling as a 'Byzantine' text. Consequently, its importance as a source for Roman military methods dating back to at least the fourth century is often overlooked.²² The novelty of much of the

¹⁸ Const. Porph. in Haldon (1990b) Text C, 106.198–9; see Consentino (2000) 277–80.

¹⁹ Dennis (1981a), (1984); Mazzucchi (1981). A new translation with commentary is in preparation by Rance (2007c).

²⁰ Zástrová (1971); Dagron (1987), (1993).

²¹ See Schiller (1970) for the *ad hoc* character of earlier imperial *constitutiones*.

²² For exceptions see Haldon (1993); Speidel (2000); Rance (2000), (2004a), (2004b).

Strategicon is deceptive. Given the extent and nature of *mimesis* in the genre, Maurice's debt to previous literary compositions is indeed relatively slight, but his deliberate choice of a colloquial idiom obscures many similarities with earlier *tactica* written in a classicizing style (Maurice pr. 16–17, 27–31, 12.B.pr. 9–10). Maurice was certainly familiar with earlier treatises, which he utilized not so much as 'sources' as to assist him in broadly conceptualizing his subject, but the *Strategicon* is explicitly 'a modest elementary handbook or introduction [*eisagogē*]'.²³ It covers the most basic topics and mundane technical minutiae, and much of its contents seems 'new' only because these subjects, as Maurice himself notes, were usually overlooked in more polished literary compositions. Clearly compilatory in character, the *Strategicon* is based in part upon documentary rather than literary sources – official ordinances, disciplinary regulations, equipment inventories and 'drill-books', some possibly translated from Latin into Greek for the first time, or non-literary monographs and 'pamphlets', informal compositions by definition unlikely to survive. Maurice consequently preserves a great deal of traditional material, still current in his own time, and of value in elucidating earlier Roman practices. The *Strategicon* stands midway between the classical genre of *tactica* and the subsequent Byzantine military corpus which it profoundly influenced, effectively the last Roman and first Byzantine military treatise.

II. TACTICAL ROLES

Late Roman armies, especially of the fifth and sixth centuries, have been traditionally characterized as predominantly heavily armoured cavalry, and increasingly horse-archers, an image classically presented in the introduction to the *Wars* of the sixth-century historian Procopius. Cavalry certainly enjoyed a higher profile in later Roman sources, but cavalry charges are intrinsically more noteworthy and impressive spectacles than infantry engagements, and invited the dramatic prose sequences expected by a civilian readership relatively uninterested in technical detail. The roles and capabilities of late Roman infantry have consequently been underestimated and the nature of contemporary combat misunderstood.²⁴ Infantry continued to form the bulk of the relatively small Roman field armies. At Strasbourg in 357 Julian deployed 10,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry (Amm. Marc. 16.12), while in 478 a large eastern force contained 30,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry (Malchus fr. 18.2.14–1). In 533 Belisarius led to north Africa 10,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry (Procop. *Wars* 3.11). Certainly from the third

²³ Maurice, *Strat.* pr. 17–27. For Maurice and Onasander see Kučma (1982–6); for Maurice and Aelian and Arrian, see Rance (2008).

²⁴ Oman (1898) 25–37; Lot (1946) 1.32; Ferrill (1986) 49–50, 128–9, 144–5; Elton pp. 293–5 above.

century new cavalry units were created, some with a heavier panoply, but this numerical increase alone gives a crude impression of tactical changes during this period.

The real issue is less the number of cavalry regiments than their deployment in combat. At end of the fourth century infantry remained tactically the most important branch of the Roman army, with cavalry in a supporting role – securing flanks, disrupting enemy formations and exploiting successes. By the early sixth century the tactical emphasis seems to have shifted towards cavalry as the main offensive arm on the battlefield, and increasingly so towards the end of the century. The causes of this development are by no means clear, not least because the obscurity of the fifth century precludes detailed study. Roman contacts with nomadic ‘steppe’ peoples, notably the Huns from the 380s and the Avars from the 550s, certainly left their mark on the equipment and techniques of Roman cavalry, and it is probable that Roman efforts to develop at least an adequate response to ‘steppe’ cavalry tactics placed greater emphasis on the existing attributes of Roman cavalry, principally its tactical mobility, and to some extent required new capabilities, including greater flexibility and especially improved mounted archery. It is also possible that changing Roman social and cultural attitudes to the mounted warrior were significant over and above his intrinsic military applications; certainly his combat skills came to be considered the proper martial accomplishments of the late Roman political and military élite.²⁵ The effects of these changes are easy to exaggerate and should be viewed in the context of the long-term development of Roman cavalry since the second century. In the battles of Belisarius’ campaigns infantry appear to play a very limited role, as at Dara in 530, Ad Decimum and Tricamerum in 533 and outside Rome in 537–8. Indeed Procopius assigns the full credit for Belisarius’ conquest of the Vandal kingdom (533–4) to his 5,000 cavalry (4.7.20–1).²⁶ It is a cliché of modern literature, however, to dismiss sixth-century Roman infantry as ‘unreliable’, ‘inexperienced’ or of ‘poor quality’ and, moreover, to argue that these generalizations in fact explain the tactical role of infantry.²⁷ Roman cavalry rarely operated in isolation, and infantry was often vital for converting the limited tactical successes of what were essentially mounted skirmishes into strategic victories (Procop. *Wars* 3.19.11–13, 4.2.1–2, 3.1–3, 3.17–24).

Roman military treatises maintained an interest in infantry deployment and even in the late sixth century infantry remained essential for certain

²⁵ Amm. Marc. 21.16.7; Veg. *Mil.* 3.26.35–8; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carm.* 2.134–46; Procop. *Wars* 4.13.11–17, 5.22.1–7; Corippus, *Iohannis* 4.538–43; Theoph. *Chron.* 318.19–28; John of Antioch fr. 201.5; Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.8.

²⁶ See Procop. *Wars* 7.1.18–21 for Belisarius’ ‘household’ conquering Italy.

²⁷ Mazzucchi (1981) 132–4; Ravegnani (1998) 58–65; Greatrex (1998) 38–40, 171.

forms of combat.²⁸ On the battlefield infantry retained an important albeit more passive role, principally as a stable battle line and rallying point for the cavalry, which employed highly fluid tactics subject to sudden reverses. Even where cavalry was the decisive striking force, it often required the support of steady infantry to engage and hold the enemy. Belisarius' apparent scepticism concerning Roman infantry, often cited as evidence of its 'unreliability', reflects his insistence that infantry should avoid an *offensive* role in battle, especially in the context of the hit-and-run mounted archery he employed during the defence of Rome (537–8); but he appears confident in the infantry's defensive abilities to stem a potential rout of the Roman cavalry (Procop. *Wars* 5.28.22–9, 29.38–41).²⁹ The style and interests of Procopius' narrative highlight 'heroic' mounted engagements, but in the few decisive set-piece battles of the Justinianic reconquest of Italy – Taginae and Mons Lactarius in 552, and Casilinum in 554 – the main Roman battle line comprised infantry or dismounted cavalry. Furthermore, in sieges, which formed the majority of military operations in this period, infantry remained indispensable for garrisons, engineering and assaults.

Battles and sieges tend to dominate contemporary campaign narratives, but their prominence belies the variety of combat operations in which the Romans regularly engaged. The low-intensity warfare of the period more frequently saw Roman forces engaged in irregular combat in which well-trained infantry was essential for raiding, skirmishing, ambushes and night attacks or any operations on uneven, wooded or marshy terrain, in which circumstances cavalry was forced to dismount and operate as infantry.³⁰ Throughout the period Roman infantry was very proficient in such tactics, operating in small units and regularly inflicting decisive defeats on scattered enemies through numerous minor actions without recourse to pitched battle at all.³¹ Comparison between Ammianus Marcellinus' account of campaigns against the Alamanni and Franks on the Rhine in the 350s–360s, and Theophylact Simocatta's reports of irregular combat against the Slavs on the Danube in the 590s, suggests long-term continuity in Roman operational capabilities and tactics when confronting similar enemies and terrain.³²

²⁸ Maurice, *Strat.* 9.2–4, II.1.42, II.2.66–70, II.85–9, II.4.69–74, 141–61, 12.A–B; Haldon (1999) 193–7; Rance (2005) 427–35.

²⁹ Procopius commends the conspicuous bravery of some infantry in this role and in fact blames the defeat on the Roman cavalry. Procopius' rhetorical comments at I.14.13–27 on recent Roman 'disorder' refer to the whole army, not to infantry specifically: see Rance (2005) 433–5, *contra* Haldon (1999) 194–5.

³⁰ Cavalry dismounting: Maurice, *Strat.* 9.4.2–9, II.1.64–7, 12.B.20.3–29.

³¹ Traina (1986–7); Whitby (1988) 174–6, 179–80; Whittaker (1994) 132–91; Elton (1996b) 72–82, 214–27; Nicasie (1998) 170–2; Richardot (2001) 266–8.

³² Amm. Marc. 17.1–2, 27.2; Theophyl. Sim. 6.8–9, 7.4–5 (with Whitby (1988) 98–104, 159–61 for distorting bias in Theophyl. Sim.); 8.3.11–15, with Maurice, *Strat.* 9.4, 11.4, 12.B.20.

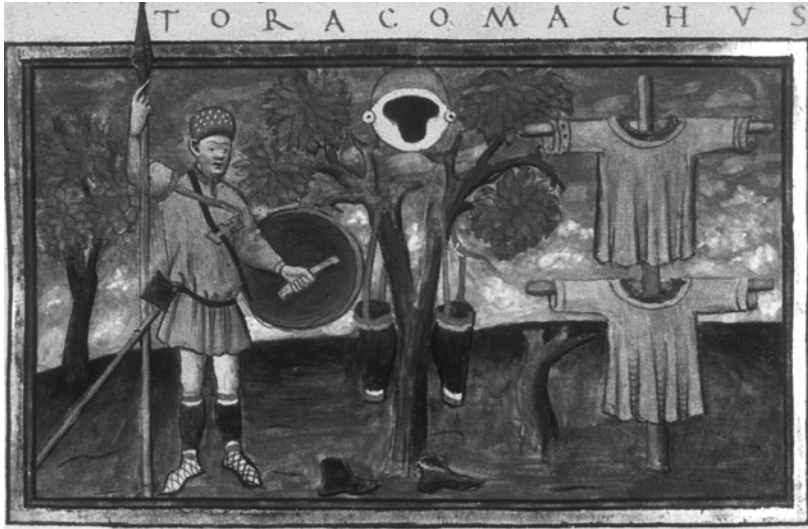


Figure 10.1 Late Roman infantryman and his equipment from a MS of *De rebus bellicis*.

The varied requirements of infantry combat are reflected in distinct changes in equipment. Vegetius' problematic, and certainly rhetorical, comment that from the reign of Gratian (375–83) Roman infantry neglected armour and helmets has until recently been accepted (Veg. *Mil.* 1.20).³³ Vegetius' precise meaning is disputed, but the artifactual, monumental and historical evidence points to the infantry's continued use of mail or scale armour (fig. 10.1).³⁴ This continuity, however, depended on context, best exemplified by the versatile fourth-century *auxilia palatina*, whose capabilities embraced both pitched battle and irregular warfare. Skirmishing and raiding operations were regularly conducted by unarmoured and lightly equipped soldiers; Maurice specifically requires infantry to discard armour and helmets for combat on rough terrain, arming themselves with short javelins (12.B.20).³⁵ Heavy armour became increasingly restricted to the battlefield and the defence of exposed fortifications, and by the sixth century Roman infantry clearly possessed a lighter panoply. Sixth-century texts note that men in the front ranks, who were the more experienced junior officers, were issued with additional equipment often unavailable to the rest of the unit, including basic items like corselets, as well as greaves and stronger shields, while Maurice recognizes that even these men might be unarmoured.³⁶ As a broad generalization, from the fourth to the sixth

³³ See pp. 286–91 above for further discussion.

³⁴ Coulston (1990); Bishop and Coulston (1993) 167–72; Charles (2003).

³⁵ See Modares' infantry 'disdaining heavier armour' in 379, Zos. 4.25.2–3.

³⁶ Agathias 2.8.4; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 15.89–90, 16.3–12, 54–8; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.4.5–8, 16.31–2, 54–5; see Janniard (2004a).

centuries the standard equipment of the Roman infantryman increasingly suited him to forms of combat other than pitched battle.

The defensive role of Roman infantry on the battlefield is reflected in tactical adaptation away from the 'volley and charge' shock tactics of the earlier legion towards a less flexible and more compact deployment, which often remained stationary to receive the enemy attack while discharging a more sustained barrage of missiles. The 'legionary phalanx' dated back at least to the early second century, albeit then just one option in a broader tactical repertoire, but from the third century became the standard battlefield deployment.³⁷ This tactically simple formation did not require independent action by sub-units, but nevertheless encompassed a number of combat roles. Vegetius describes his so-called *legio antiqua* arrayed in differently equipped ranks, with heavily armoured troops to the front and rear sandwiching variously armed missile troops. Vegetius implicitly compares this deployment to the manipular legion of the Republic, but it is less antiquarian than it appears and is consistent with both contemporary historical narratives and the *Strategicon* written two centuries later.³⁸ The heavily armoured junior officers in the front ranks engaged in close-quarters combat with thrusting spears and long slashing-swords called *spathae*, their circular or oval shields, smaller than the earlier legionary *scutum*, being better suited to combat in a compact battle line. The role of the ranks behind was to fire projectiles over the heads of these 'file-leaders'.

Late Roman close-order infantry employed an impressive number and variety of missiles, though ambiguous terminology sometimes renders precise identification problematic. Vegetius equates the earlier *pilum* with the contemporary *spiculum*, and the Germanic *ango* was a similar type of heavy javelin (2.15).³⁹ In the military handbooks the *verutum* was the most commonly attested of a number of short, light javelins, including 'Moorish' and later 'Slavic' designs. In pitched battle these were most effective in short-range volleys, and were favoured by infantry as a primary weapon in irregular combat.⁴⁰ Vegetius also mentions *manuballistae* and *arcuballistae*, different types of cross-bow, though the *solenarion* listed in the *Strategicon*, once considered a similar device, is now identified as a reed-like arrow-guide offering greater range to conventional bows.⁴¹ *Mattiobarbuli* were lead-weighted darts, known generally as *plumbatae*. First attested in the late third century, and of varying size, weight and design, *mattiobarbuli* were probably

³⁷ Arr. *Acies contra Alanos* 15–19; Wheeler (1979); (2004); Nicasie (1998) 210–14; Haldon (1999) 192–3, 205–8; Menéndez Argüín (2000); Richardot (2001) 253–7; Janniard (2004a).

³⁸ Veg. *Mil.* 2.15–17, 3.14–15; Julian. *Or.* 2.57C–D; Amm. Marc. 14.6.17, 24.6.9; Procop. *Wars* 8.29–31; Agathias 2.4–5; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 16; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.A.7, B.9, 12, 16.39–55.

³⁹ See Bishop and Coulston (1993) 69, 160–2 for linguistic confusion about shafted weapons.

⁴⁰ Veg. *Mil.* 1.20, 2.15; Maurice, *Strat.* 11.4.71–4, 12.B.5, 20.7–10, 84–90; Theophyl. Sim. 7.4.2.

⁴¹ Veg. *Mil.* 2.15, 3.14, 4.20, 22; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.6.8–9. Haldon (1970); Dennis (1981a); Nishimura (1988); Chevedden (1995) 138–52; Baatz (1999) 11–16.

used *en masse* as a shock tactic. Vegetius asserts that by their long range they effectively gave close-order infantry the firepower of archers (1.17).⁴²

Vegetius' comment is significant and more broadly instructive. Throughout this period Roman light infantry (*leves armaturae*, *psiloi*) appears in battles, sieges and irregular combat, and there is a notable increase in the number of specialist archer units (*sagittarii*). The appearance in the second century of *lanciarii* or 'javelineers', first as a distinctive class of soldiers within certain legions, later as a legionary title, perhaps implies a more prominent or specialized use of the *lancea*, a short-shafted, small-headed javelin, though it is disputed whether by the late fourth century the regimental designation still reflected these units' contemporary tactical function or merely their origins (the modern British army contains tank regiments entitled 'Hussars' or 'Lancers').⁴³ It is also possible that certain ethnic designations implied light infantry – Isaurians, for example, appear to have functioned as specialist javelineers.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, late Roman close-order infantry clearly possessed capabilities traditionally assigned to light infantry. Vegetius requires a quarter to a third of all recruits to be trained as archers (1.15), while Maurice indicates that *ad hoc* light infantry units were regularly formed by drawing off a third to a half of those close-order infantrymen most adept at archery (12.B.9.3–8).⁴⁵ Both authors assume universal proficiency with slings, which were especially effective in disrupting cavalry formations (Veg. *Mil.* 1.16; Maurice 12.B.3–4, 18.11–12). Although much remains unresolved, this intra-unit diversity in armament and weaponry, and especially the greatly increased fire-power of close-order infantry, appears to be a continuation of early third-century developments or even earlier.⁴⁶ This is not to say that specialist light infantry became redundant, only that the role and capabilities of close-order infantry were increasingly versatile or 'despecialized', making late Roman armies potentially more adaptable and better able to improvise in different combat situations.

Throughout this period cavalry became the best-trained, best-equipped and most versatile warriors in the Roman army. Yet while Roman cavalry became more effective in fulfilling its existing tactical roles, the fundamentals of mounted combat remained unchanged. Different types of cavalry fulfilled distinct roles at different phases of combat, but the most significant attribute of cavalry remained its tactical mobility, which determined its specific utilization on the battlefield. First, it countered and

⁴² Kolias (1988) 173–6; Eagles (1989); Bennet (1991); Völling (1991), (1991–2); Degen (1992); Buora (1997); Charles (2004).

⁴³ Brennan (1980) 553–4; Elton (1996b) 103–4; Nicasie (1998) 190–92.

⁴⁴ Amm. Marc. 14. 2.7; Procop. *Wars* 5.29.42; Just. *Nov.* 85.4; Agathias 3.20.9.

⁴⁵ This appears to be what is described at e.g. Zos. 2.50.2–3; Procop. *Wars* 8.31.5.

⁴⁶ Drew-Bear (1981) 103–9; Coulston (1985) 282–5; Balty (1988) 99–101; Nicasie (1998) 189–92; Janniard (2004a).

drove off opposing cavalry, depriving the enemy of the tactical initiative its presence afforded; thus battles frequently opened with all-cavalry skirmishes. Second, it assisted in breaking up enemy infantry formations, pressuring them into collapse through a combination of missiles and psychological impact, especially on exposed flanks. Third, it harried the defeated enemy or, conversely, covered a retreat. Until the fifth century, the majority of *comitatenses* cavalry units were armoured and shield-bearing troops armed with spears and javelins. They were capable of both skirmishing and close-quarters fighting, attempting to break opposing formations with a charge but, if meeting resistance, wheeling aside and disconcerting the enemy with javelins, a manoeuvre requiring considerable training and equestrian expertise. Their harassing the enemy and undermining his morale was often a prelude to the main attack by infantry.

The most conspicuous cavalry units were the heavily armoured *cataphracti* and *clibanarii*, but there were never large numbers of these, and it would be a misconception to view the late Roman period as one of unilinear 'progress' towards heavier cavalry. Nevertheless, they were a potentially decisive force in Roman battle tactics. While the precise differences, if any, between *cataphracti* and *clibanarii* are disputed, there appears to have been no significant distinction in their combat roles.⁴⁷ Their chief weapon was a cavalry lance or *contus*, usually wielded two-handed, although across the empire there was probably greater variety in equipment than is often assumed.⁴⁸ Both *cataphracti* and *clibanarii* enjoyed extensive protection against missiles that would otherwise disconcert the cohesion of close-order cavalry formations. There is some evidence that maces or clubs were regarded as the most effective close-quarters weapons against *cataphracti*, though their character is unclear.⁴⁹ The literary and sculptural evidence for horse armour is ambiguous, perhaps reflecting regional variations; certainly the mounts of the front ranks were armoured, though their flanks, bellies and legs remained vulnerable.⁵⁰ These 'shock' units aimed to overwhelm the enemy's morale rather than clash directly at close quarters, and contemporary descriptions attest their imposing spectacle on the battlefield.⁵¹ They could drive off opposing cavalry, but were particularly effective against infantry already revealing signs of disorder or weakness. Seasoned Roman

⁴⁷ Eadie (1967) 165–9; Hoffmann (1969–70) 1:265–77; Bivar (1972); Diethart and Dintsis (1984); Speidel (1984a); *contra* Mielczarek (1993) 41–50.

⁴⁸ The *equites sagittarii clibanarii* in the north African establishment, for example, appear to have been equipped with bows (*Not. Dign. [occ.]* 6.67).

⁴⁹ Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4 (10).24.3; Lib. *Or.* 59.110; Zos. 1.52–3, with comments by Kolias (1988) 173–84.

⁵⁰ Heliod. *Aeth.* 9.15; Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4 (10).22.4; Lib. *Or.* 18.206; Amm. Marc. 16.12.22; 24.6.8; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 17.12–16, 44.31–6; Maurice, *Strat.* 1.2.35–9; Theophyl. Sim. 2.4.7; Atheoph. *Chron.* 318.25–8 (AM 6118).

⁵¹ Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4 (10).22.3–23.4, 24.5–7; Julian *Or.* 1.37; Amm. Marc. 16.10.8; Veg. *Mil.* 3.23 with Harl (1996).

infantry usually possessed the discipline, morale and armament to withstand such onslaughts by Persian or Sarmatian *cataphracts*, but few of the empire's enemies regularly fielded infantry of comparable quality. If the prospect of their approach failed to break the enemy, Roman *cataphracts* usually drew rein and continued to menace, while accompanying bow- or javelin-armed cavalry further disrupted the enemy line.

Long before the advent of the Huns in the late fourth century there were numerous Roman horse-archer units, usually recruited among eastern subjects with established toxological traditions, notably the Osrhoeni in the third century, or from among allied Armenians and Saracens, an indication of the importance and rarity of the relevant expertise. Nevertheless, horse-archers appear infrequently in fourth-century histories. Their role was to utilize their tactical manoeuvrability and fire-power to drive off opposing missile troops and to weaken enemy formations and morale, often as preparation for an attack by *cataphracts*.⁵² Although accounts of individual precision shooting impressed historians, horse-archers were most effective through the shock tactic of general barrages of archery, as a galloping horse is not an ideal platform for accurate shooting.⁵³ The fifth-century development of the Roman horse-archer is obscure, though it probably saw long-standing traditions of armoured horse-archery from Mesopotamia substantially modified by contact with the Huns. Hunnic influence included new designs of heavier composite bows, archery equipment and techniques, and high-arched saddles, probably diffused during the fifth-century Hunnic wars or via Hun and Alan horse-archers in Roman service from the early fifth century.⁵⁴

By the reign of Justinian (527–65) 'native' armoured horse-archers become prominent, with a reputation owing much to Procopius' well-known introductory eulogy (I.I.12–14):

Contemporary bowmen [*toxotai*] go into battle wearing corselets and equipped with greaves extending to the knee. On the right side hang their arrows, on the other their sword. And there are some who have a lance also attached to them and, at the shoulders, a sort of small shield without a grip, such as to cover the region of the face and neck. They are expert horsemen, and are able without difficulty to direct their bows to either side while riding at full speed, and to shoot an opponent whether in pursuit or in flight.

Procopius' cavalryman is often taken as the model of a new type of 'composite archer-lancer', who combined the roles of missile and shock troops, and

⁵² For cooperation between *cataphracts* and horse-archers: Julian *Or.* 1.37A; 2.60A–B; Amm. Marc. 16.12.7; see Coulston (1986) on combined tactics.

⁵³ See Wheeler (2001) 180–1 for ancient fire-power generally. For sixth-century precision shooting, see e.g. Procop. *Wars* 4.13.14–16, 24.11, 5.22.1–7; Agathias 2.14.1–4.

⁵⁴ Veg. *Mil.* 1.20, 3.26.36; Bivar (1972) 283–6; Maenchen-Helfen (1973) 221–32, 255–8; Coulston (1985) 241–5, 271–8; Elton (1996b) 92–4. See James (1987) for possible earlier developments.



Figure 10.2 Sixth-century Egyptian ivory relief depicting a mounted armoured archer and armoured infantry.

whose appearance perhaps embodies a distinct break between ‘Roman’ and ‘Byzantine’ armies (fig. 10.2). But Procopius describes essentially a Roman horse-archer, defined by his archery skills; the historian’s very purpose is to refute comparisons between contemporary archers and their pitiful Homeric namesakes. He notes lances only as additional weapons used by a few, and to this extent Procopius’ ‘composite archer-lancer’ is an ideal, possibly attained only by officers or élite cavalry such as *bucellarii*.⁵⁵ Procopius lauds the horse-archer precisely because of his conspicuous role in Justinian’s reconquest of the west. Superiority in archery was fundamental to Roman success against the Vandals and Ostrogoths, who deployed few if any horse-archers and thus preferred close-quarters combat, while Belisarius, in assessing the relative strengths of Roman and Ostrogothic armaments, required its strict avoidance. Roman archery was chiefly responsible for the spectacular victories of Taginae and Casilinum, but appears at its most effective in the numerous small skirmishes around Rome in 537–8.⁵⁶ Different tactics were required, however, when facing peoples who themselves fielded large numbers of expert horse-archers. The Huns and Avars possessed long-standing expertise in mounted archery, which, with their flexible tactics, rendered Roman fire-power relatively less effective.⁵⁷ Rapid Persian archery remained a tactical problem throughout the entire period,

⁵⁵ Breccia (2004) 73–7. See Agathias 2.8.1, where *some* horse-archers also have *sarissae*. For the impressive military skills of an élite warrior see e.g. Procop. *Wars* 4.13.13–17.

⁵⁶ Procop. *Wars* 3.8.27, 4.3.9, 5.27, 8.32.6–10; Agathias 2.9; see Rance (2005) 465–9.

⁵⁷ Amm. Marc. 31.2.8–9; Zos. 4.20.4; Maurice, *Strat.* 11.2.24–30, 52–4. For possible ethnographic stereotyping, see Lindner (1981); Elton (1996b) 25–9.

despite the fact that, missile for missile, Roman archery was more powerful.⁵⁸ In these circumstances Roman troops avoided missile combat and sought to close with the enemy as fast as possible to negate their superior fire-power.⁵⁹ These are, of course, basic military tenets, but they underline that armament, troop types and tactical deployment varied considerably according to location and adversary.

While Procopius' 'ideal' warrior marks a stage in the development of the late Roman 'composite archer-lancer', this type appears as the standard Roman cavalryman only at the very end of this period. In the *Strategicon* all cavalrymen are expected to be proficient with both lance and bow, switching easily from one to the other (I.1). Cavalry units were trained to deploy as *cursores* – in open order, harrying enemies with archery – and *defensores* – in a well-ordered close array which could support the *cursores* if these failed to break the opposing formation and had to retire to regroup. While *cursores* and *defensores* have their origins in the respective roles of Roman shock and missile cavalry of an earlier period, Maurice expects every cavalry unit to be able to perform both roles (3.5.63–76, 86–109). Indeed, 'despecialization' in armament, training and tactics is a defining characteristic of later sixth-century cavalry, perhaps reflected in the apparent disappearance of specialist unit designations like *sagittarii* or *cataphracti*. A significant influence may be identified in the empire's eastern enemies, who had for long effectively combined the tactics of horse-archers and *cataphracti*. The equipment of some sixth-century Persian cavalry, and certainly the panoply required by the reforms of Khusro I (531–79), suggests that they were expected to fulfil both roles (Tabari I.1.964,5:262–3, Yarshater).⁶⁰

The most immediate tactical model, however, was Avar cavalry operating in the Balkans from the 560s (Maurice II.2.24–30). Listing the Roman cavalryman's regulation equipment, the *Strategicon* repeatedly specifies items 'of Avar design', including kaftan-like tunics, personal and equestrian armour, and tents (I.2); in many respects Roman and Avar cavalry would have been indistinguishable.⁶¹ The only Avar-inspired weapons listed are 'cavalry lances with thongs in the middle', a simple modification which allowed a more dextrous control in combat (I.1.16–21, 2.18–19).⁶² Stirrups (*skalai*), first mentioned in the *Strategicon*, are not specified as Avar in origin, but the connection has long been recognized (I.2.41–2).⁶³ Stirrups are no longer considered to have been of such revolutionary significance to mounted

⁵⁸ Procop. *Wars* I.14.35–7, 18.31–4, 8.8.33–4; Maurice, *Strat.* II.1.16–17.

⁵⁹ Amm. Marc. 24.2.5, 6.11; 25.1.17; Procop. *Wars* 2.18.24; Theophyl. Sim. 3.14.6–7; 8.2.11; Maurice, *Strat.* 7.A.pr.33–4; II.1.43–5, 59–63, 2.52, 70–2.

⁶⁰ Bivar (1972) 275–6; Coulston (1986); Michalak (1987); Movassat (2005) 62–79.

⁶¹ Haldon (1999) 128–31; Nagy (2005). On Roman-Avar conflict see Whitby (1988), 84–6, 169–74, 176–9.

⁶² Haldon (1975) 21; Coulston (1986) 65–6; Kolias (1988) 200–1; Nagy (2005) 136–7.

⁶³ Maenchen-Helfen (1973) 207–8; Bivar (1955), (1972) 286–8; Littauer (1981); Werner (1984).

combat, since contemporary saddles – both the Roman horned type and the later ‘steppe’ high-arched saddle – afforded riders considerable stability.⁶⁴ Stirrups probably made easier what was already possible, but this innovation still had clear benefit. The Roman cavalry’s rapid and universal adoption of stirrups is best explained in the context of the more rapid training of new cavalry units in the demanding tactics of the later sixth century, and especially horse-archers, who required greater lateral support and control of their mounts as they twisted in the saddle. Maurice nowhere expects the ideal ‘Procopian’ warrior, but requires of all troopers a moderate degree of mounted marksmanship (I.1, 2.28–36, 5.8–9). Indeed, it is probable that Maurice’s ‘composite archer-lancer’ was also something of an ideal. The eastern empire continued to raise barbarian cavalry units with specialist weapons skills, including Hunnic and Turkic peoples serving as horse-archers, and Germanic peoples as traditionally lance- and shield-armed cavalry, notably Lombards recruited by Tiberius II (578–82).⁶⁵ That Maurice envisages these allies performing their respective specialized tactical roles in the Roman battle line is a comment on the potentially limited numbers of ‘native’ composite archer-lancers (I.2.21–2, 2.6.33–5).

Although fleets had logistical importance, combat in late antiquity was overwhelmingly terrestrial. Certainly naval actions could be strategically significant, famously in 324 when Constantine’s fleet forced a passage of the Hellespont against Licinius’ larger fleet, but even after the 430s, when the Vandals challenged Rome’s 600-year mastery of the western Mediterranean, set-piece naval engagements were rare. There survives only one detailed account of a late Roman naval battle, off Ancona in 551 (Procop. *Wars* 8.23), which must be supplemented by brief and potentially antiquarian treatments in military handbooks.⁶⁶ Naval battles appear to have remained the traditional inshore clashes, though between increasingly smaller and lighter warships, in which exchanges of missiles, artillery and incendiaries inflicted losses and disorganized formations, while careful manoeuvring preceded ramming or boarding and close-quarters combat by heavily armoured troops identical in equipment to land forces.⁶⁷ In the broader context of riverine and maritime security, patrol vessels – *scaphae exploratoriae*, *lusoriae*, dromons – were regularly employed in sudden raids and intercepting enemy incursions, such as against the Alamanni on the

⁶⁴ Ghirshman (1973); Hermann (1989); Connolly and van Driel-Murray (1991); Junkelmann (1998) III.34–74. See e.g. Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4 (10). 24.4.

⁶⁵ Haldon (1984) 96–101; Christie (1991); Whitby (1995) 89–92.

⁶⁶ Though see also Procop. *Wars* 3.6.17–24; Malalas 16.6 Thurn = 402.22–406.8 Dindorf. For military handbooks see Veg. *Mil.* 4.31–46, and Syrianus Magister, *Naum.* 9; on which see Lammert (1940); Baatz and Bockius (1997). It is significant that Maurice omits naval warfare from his otherwise comprehensive treatise cf. pp. 334–5 above.

⁶⁷ Reddé (1986) 338–49, 584–92; Elton (1996b) 257.

Rhine and the Slavs on the lower Danube.⁶⁸ In such combat the Romans always enjoyed superiority in vessels and seamanship, easily frustrating the seemingly hapless efforts of barbarian peoples to undertake waterborne initiatives, most decisively in the destruction of large numbers of Slavic canoes (*monoxyla*) during the Avaro-Slavic siege of Constantinople in 626.⁶⁹ It was not until the development of Arab fleets in the mid-seventh century that east Roman naval ascendancy was seriously challenged.

III. SIEGECRAFT

Sieges constitute over half the military engagements in late antiquity. Given the relative rarity of large-scale Roman offensives before the sixth century, Roman troops were ordinarily in the role of defenders, and more likely to be *limitanei* than *comitatenses*. This changed perspective is evident in contemporary treatises, which hitherto dealt almost exclusively with offensive siegecraft.⁷⁰ Although sieges featured in civil wars, only on the eastern frontier were Roman forces periodically required to undertake major siege operations. Indeed siege warfare in this theatre was altogether more complex. Of the Romans' enemies only the Persians, partly through imitating Roman siege techniques, partly by inheriting long-standing poliorcetic traditions of the region, regularly possessed the technological and logistical expertise required to mount lengthy and tenacious siege operations, such as their three-month siege of Amida in 502/3 (Procop. *Wars* 1.7.29) and their six-month siege of Dara in 573 (Joh. Eph. *Hist. eccl.* 6.5).⁷¹ In Europe Germanic peoples usually lacked the logistical and technological capabilities for successful long-term investments of Roman fortifications, but were adept at other methods such as surprise assault, treachery and deception (Amm. Marc. 31.6.4).⁷² The Huns were more successful, owing to the availability of large numbers of expendable subjects and occasional access to Roman siege technology, as during their determined sieges of Naissus in 442 and Aquileia in 452 (Priscus frs. 6.2, 22.1).⁷³ Similar factors underlie Avar successes in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, though also significant were new types of siege engine they introduced to Europe from the Chinese cultural sphere.

The essentials of siegecraft changed little in late antiquity, an impression accentuated by the stylistic interests of historians who sought to imitate the

⁶⁸ Amm. Marc. 17.1.4–7, 13.16–18, 18.2.12; Veg. *Mil.* 4.37, 46; Theophyl. Sim. 7.5.3; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.21; Rupprecht (1986); Whitby (1988) 176–80; Elton (1996b) 78–9, 245–6; Richardot (2001) 165–75; Lee (2002).

⁶⁹ Zos. 4.38–9, 5.21.2–4; Agathias 5.21.6–22; *Chron. Pasch.* 719.14–720.3, 725.1–5 (trans. Whitby and Whitby (1989) 174–5, 177–9). See Howard-Johnston (1995a) 139–41.

⁷⁰ Veg. *Mil.* 4; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 11–13; Maurice, *Strat.* 10.

⁷¹ Leriche (1993); McCotter (1995) 405–29.

⁷² Thompson (1982) 84–6; Elton (1996b) 82–6.

⁷³ Tausend (1985–6) cf. pp. 331–2 above.

elements of a 'Thucydidean' siege; nevertheless, there were developments specific to this period.⁷⁴ The two basic methods of siege, blockade and assault, were employed separately and in combination. Blockades aimed to restrict and manipulate supplies and information in order to reduce the resources and morale of the defenders, terrorize the civilian population and foment treachery and factional strife. Roman defenders were determined to maintain high morale, especially among civilian populations, and in this religious ideology, institutions and personnel played an increasingly important role, most conspicuously bishop Eunomius' defence of Theodosiopolis (Resaina) in *c.* 421/2 with a stone-throwing machine christened 'Thomas the Apostle', and the monks who manned the battlements of Mardin in *c.* 608 after its garrison fled the advancing Persians.⁷⁵ To the unhurried besieger blockade was clearly economic in terms of casualties, though it required sufficient logistical support and the absence of the enemy field army for the duration. Limitation of food and especially water was possibly a more frequent phenomenon than the sophisticated machinery and engineering prominent in historical narratives. The Romans could mount very large-scale blockades, isolating whole regions under enemy occupation, such as the Goths in the Haemus range in 377 or Alaric in the Po valley in 402. Late Roman sieges, however, appear generally less determined or thorough. The circumvallation standard to earlier operations is a rare expedient after the early third century.⁷⁶ 'Blockade' in effect frequently amounted to close encampment and associated reconnaissance and foraging, which left the investment less complete and the besiegers vulnerable to sorties. Within the context of blockades varied instances of surprise assaults, treachery and deception resulted in either the seizure or surrender of fortifications.

Open assault was usually attempted only after more economical means had failed or to anticipate a relief force. Superiority in engines, engineering and especially fire-power was often decisive. Clearing the defenders from a section of wall through concentrated missiles was an essential preliminary to assault, while the defenders sought through missiles, physical obstacles, sorties and counter-engineering to destroy the besiegers' equipment and keep them from the walls. The Romans continued to construct and deploy artillery and siege engines, which were usually beyond the means of their enemies.⁷⁷ The bolt-projecting, two-armed torsion engine called a *catapulta* up to the fourth century was thereafter designated a *ballista*, a term previously applied to a two-armed, torsion stone-projector (fig. 10.3).

⁷⁴ Blockley (1972); Adshead (1990).

⁷⁵ Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 5.36; Mich. Syr. 10.25. See generally Whitby (1998) and p. 339 above.

⁷⁶ For circumvallation see e.g. Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 2.30.4; Procop. *Wars* 5.16.16; Joh. Eph. *Hist. eccl.* 6.5; Theophyl. Sim. 3.5.14.

⁷⁷ Marsden (1969) 188–9, (1971) 234–48; Baatz (1978), (1994), (1999); Chevedden (1995); Southern and Dixon (1996) 152–67.

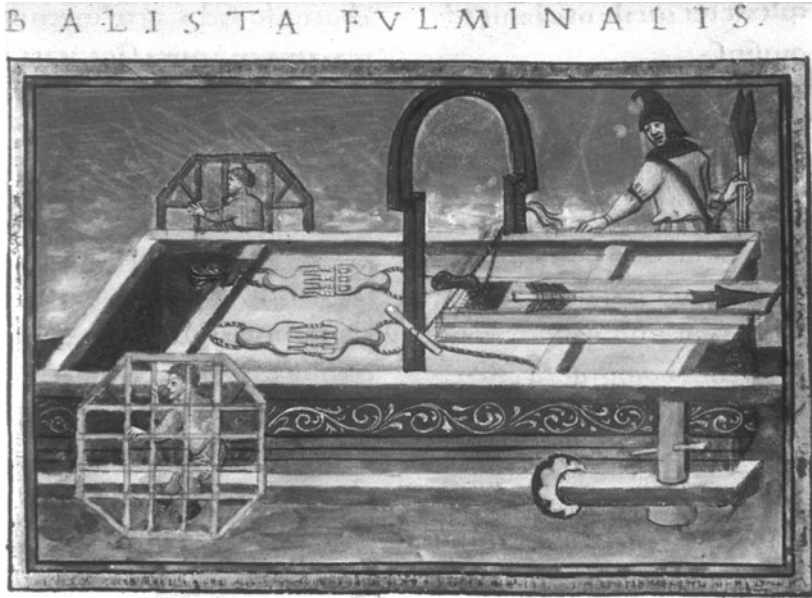


Figure 10.3 Late Roman artillery piece from a MS of *De rebus bellicis*.

Ballistae were important principally for anti-personnel fire but could also affect enemy morale.⁷⁸ The only late Roman stone-projecting device was the *onager* or 'wild ass', a single-armed sling inserted into a massive torsion-spring mounted on a heavy base. It was cruder and less accurate than its predecessor, the two-armed stone-projecting *ballista*, but simpler to construct and operate.⁷⁹ Stone-projectors, while also anti-personnel devices, could create and exploit weaknesses in defences, especially by concentrating fire upon gates or towers, but were particularly useful against opposing artillery and machinery. Both bolt- and stone-projecting artillery also fired a variety of incendiaries.

It is often assumed that torsion-powered base-mounted artillery continued to be used throughout the whole period, but the issue is unclear.⁸⁰ The simpler torsion-powered machines like the *onager* undoubtedly persist, while archaeological finds confirm the continuance of torsion-powered bolt-projectors also into the later fourth century, but the design of *ballistae* attested thereafter is ambiguous. Certainly the base-mounted *ballista* described by Procopius in the 530s appears rather to be a tension-powered

⁷⁸ Amm. Marc. 19.1.7–8, 5.6; Zos. 1.70; Procop. *Wars* 5.23.9–12.

⁷⁹ Amm. Marc. 19.7.6–7, 23.4.4–7, 24.4.28. Marsden (1971) 249–65; Chevedden (1995) 137–8; Baatz (1999) 10–11.

⁸⁰ Chevedden (1995) challenges some long-held assumptions.

device (5.21.14–18).⁸¹ This transformation in Roman artillery need not be indicative of technological ‘decline’, but rather reflects the relative utility of tension-powered artillery, which although less powerful than torsion machines was more reliable and much easier to manufacture, calibrate, maintain and operate. Additionally, the Avars introduced new traction-powered ‘stone-throwers’ (*petroboloi*), first noted at their siege of Thessalonica in 586. These giant devices of oriental origin were easy to build and operate and ‘hurled mountains and hills’ with great destructive force. This machine was a distant ancestor of the medieval counterweight trebuchet.⁸²

Mobile siege towers gave artillery improved trajectories and, terrain permitting, offered assault troops access to battlements. They were within the capability of most Roman enemies, including the Goths in the Balkans in the 240–250s and before Rome in 537, and the Avaro-Slavic sieges of Thessalonica in c. 616–18 and Constantinople in 626.⁸³ Siege mounds, or ramps of timber and earth, provided higher shooting platforms and facilitated engineering work against walls, which the defenders might correspondingly heighten while attempting to undermine the besiegers’ structures.⁸⁴ The Persians occasionally also employed elephants as mobile shooting platforms.⁸⁵ Engineering operations, conducted beneath mobile penthouses and screens, principally involved filling in ditches, removing obstacles to siege machinery, undermining foundations or tunnelling within fortifications.⁸⁶ Rams were applied to identifiable points of weakness, often gates or sections damaged by mining, the defenders making strenuous efforts to destroy the ram’s vehicle, deflect its blows or thicken the wall.⁸⁷ A breach, however achieved, usually precipitated an open assault by heavily armoured troops expecting fierce fighting and extensive casualties. Contemporary treatises, supported by several historical instances, advise that strong garrisons be allowed to escape when cities fell in order to avoid the damage they could inflict in a desperate defence.⁸⁸ The sack of a town, should political circumstances allow, rewarded besiegers for this gruelling ordeal and reinforced the relationship between commander and troops.

⁸¹ Marsden (1971) 246–8; Chevedden (1995) 160–3; Baatz (1999).

⁸² *Miracula S. Demetrii* 139, 146, 151–4; Needham (1976); Whitby (1988) 116–21; McCotter (1995) 212–13, 440–3; Tarver (1995); Chevedden (2000), 73–5; Chevedden et al. (2000). The story concerning the Roman inventor of Avar siegecraft in Theophyl. Sim. 2.16.10–11 is implausible.

⁸³ Dexippus fr. 25, 27; Veg. *Mil.* 4.17–18; Procop. *Wars* 5.21.3–4, 6.12.1–12; *Chron. Pasch.* 720.1–3 (trans. Whitby and Whitby (1989) 174). See Howard-Johnston (1995a).

⁸⁴ Veg. *Mil.* 4.15; Procop. *Wars* 1.7.14–15; 2.26.23–30; Ps.-Joshua Stylites 50, 53; Zach. *Hist. eccl.* 7.3.

⁸⁵ Julian. *Or.* 2.64B, 65B–66A; Amm. Marc. 19.7.6–7; Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 2.14; Procop. *Wars* 8.13.4–5, 14.34–8; *Build.* 2.1.11–16. See Rance (2003) 362–4, 368–71.

⁸⁶ Amm. Marc. 24.4.21–3; Veg. *Mil.* 4.24; Zos. 3.21–2; Procop. *Wars* 2.13.20–8; Agathias 1.10; Men. Prot. fr. 23.7, 40; Leriche (1993) McCotter (1995) 375–80.

⁸⁷ Amm. Marc. 20.6.6–7, 11.11–15; 23.4.8–9; Veg. *Mil.* 4.23; Procop. *Wars* 5.21.6–12.

⁸⁸ Procop. *Wars* 2.8.20–8; 7.20.20–1; Joh. Eph. *Hist. eccl.* 6.5; Maurice, *Strat.* 8.A.25, B.92, 9.2.45–8.

IV. THE LATE ROMAN BATTLE

The prevailing interest of military historians in the detailed reconstruction of ordinary soldiers' combat experiences has yet to consider the late Roman battle. Although much is hard to discern, and the 'typical battle' is a misleading abstraction, it is possible to identify consistent characteristics in the way Roman armies fought battles between the late third and early seventh centuries, and in some measure to elucidate the experience of fighting. Late Roman commanders deployed their forces according to their size and composition, local terrain and the particular adversary. Having obtained information from scouts, captives or deserters, and with particular care to evade potential stratagems, generals selected the ground best suited to an ambush or pitched battle, the two being by no means mutually exclusive. Against dispersed barbarians Roman commanders employed irregular tactics to induce them to concentrate their forces, thus both compounding their logistical difficulties and precipitating a general engagement in which the Romans would usually have the advantage. These were the tactics pursued by the *magister militum* Sebastianus against the marauding Goths in 378, leading directly to the desired enemy concentration at Adrianople, where the emperor Valens' decision to engage the united Gothic forces before they dispersed again was less rash than is commonly assumed.⁸⁹

Deployment for battle remained the traditional battle line of the Principate – close-order infantry massed in the centre, cavalry on the flanks, and archers usually firing overhead from the rear. The Romans deployed in this manner at Strasbourg and Adrianople, and the same serried infantry ranks formed the battle lines at Taginae and Casilinum.⁹⁰ The slight increase in the number of cavalry units and the changed dynamics of sixth-century battles did not significantly alter this standard arrangement. The stability of the infantry line might be reinforced by artillery to the rear and flanks. *Carroballistae* were originally torsion-powered, later probably tension-powered bolt-projectors mounted on wagons; although few in number their sophistication and accuracy could damage enemy morale.⁹¹ Artificial obstacles such as ditches, lines of wagons, caltrops and other *chevaux-de-frise* might be employed to bolster the infantry line or break up the enemy's attack.⁹²

Outflanking and envelopment were at once a Roman commander's greatest fear and aspiration, and often the decisive point of an engagement.

⁸⁹ Amm. Marc. 31.11–12; Eunapius fr. 44.5; Zos. 4.23.1–4; Elton (1996b) 214–18. Nicasie (1998) 242; contra Speidel (1996c). See similarly Julian at Strasbourg (357): Amm. Marc. 16.12.14.

⁹⁰ Pacatus, *Pan. Lat.* 2. (12) 35.3; Julian. *Or.* 1.35D–36A, 2.57C–D; Lib. *Or.* 18.54; Amm. Marc. 16.12.21, 31.12.11–12, 16; Veg. *Mil.* 2.15, 3.16, 20; Procop. *Wars* 4.17.2–6, 8.29–32; Agathias 2.8.1–5; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 35; Corippus, *Iohannis* 4.472–563, 6.516–27; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.8, 12–13.

⁹¹ *De rebus bellicis* 7; Veg. *Mil.* 2.25.3.14; Urbicius, *Epitedeuma* 8–9, 15–16, with Greatrex (1998) 171–3; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.18.9–11. Marsden (1969) 190–91; Chevedden (1995) 141–2, 154–60.

⁹² Cassius Dio 75.7.3; Procop. *Wars* 1.13, 4.17.2–4; Urbicius, *Epitedeuma*; Maurice, *Strat.* 4.3, 12.B.18.

Where possible one or both flanks were anchored upon natural obstacles such as hills, rivers or marshes, or alternatively 'refused' or extended to avoid outflanking.⁹³ Contemporary historians frequently mention a 'crescentic' (*lunaris*, *bicornis*, *menoeides*) battle line; Julian 'arrayed his line in a two-pronged form' near Brumath in 356, and 'in the form of a crescent with curving wings' at Maranga in 363. At Taginae and Casilinum Narses' extending 'crescent formation' utilized devastating archery to inflict enormous casualties on the nearly enveloped enemy, and Priscus used a similar deployment successfully against the Avars near Viminacium in 599.⁹⁴

The maintenance and timely application of reserves, so fundamental to earlier Roman tactics, appears to have persisted, at least to the late fourth century, for countering breakthroughs and outflanking manoeuvres, and renewing the impetus against wearying opponents. Most clearly at Strasbourg in 357 the successive involvement of reserve units halted the Alamannic onslaught.⁹⁵ By the sixth century the more defensive role of infantry in battle is typically reflected in a single battle line apparently without differentiated tactical sub-units other than a broad tripartite division into right, centre and left. Nevertheless, troops were still retained to react to emergencies or exploit successes; at Casilinum Narses plugged a gap in his line at the apex of the Frankish-Alammanic wedge with a reserve force of Heruls.⁹⁶ Too much should not be made of Maurice's criticism of Roman (and Persian) deployment in a single line devoid of reserves, contrasting with Avaric and Turkic practice; this statement expressly relates to all-cavalry forces, prone to loss of coordination and unexpected reverses, and its context is Maurice's encouragement of better cavalry tactics (2.1–2). Infantry reserves might be deployed in a *cuneus* or 'wedge', also called *caput porcinum* or 'swine's head', a dense and narrow-fronted formation, which could break the enemy line. Often assumed to be of Germanic origin, a similar *svínfylking* ('swine array') later appearing in Viking warfare, the 'swine's head' may however be an instance of a 'barbarian' expression popularly applied to an existing Roman formation, and not evidence for the 'Germanization' of Roman tactics.⁹⁷

⁹³ Julian. *Or.* 1.35D–36A, 2.57D; Amm. Marc. 27.2.5; Procop. *Wars* 1.18.26, 35–49; Veg. *Mil.* 3.18–20; Maurice, *Strat.* 2.4–5, 3.5.110–19, 3.10, 3.13–14, 6.5, 12.A.7.

⁹⁴ For historical instances see Dexippus fr. 6 (457.1–4); probably Pan. *Lat.* 12. (9). 6; Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4 (10).24.1–2; Amm. Marc. 16.2.13, 25.1.16, 27.10.13; Procop. *Wars* 8.32.5–10; Agathias 2.9.2–6; Theophyl. Sim. 8.3.1–5. See also envelopment tactics for cavalry prescribed in Maurice, *Strat.* 3.10, 13, 14, 6.1, 12.D; cf. Onasander 21.5. See Rance (2005) 462–5.

⁹⁵ Amm. Marc. 16.12.42–9 (*Lib. Or.* 18.59 appears to give a confused version of the same); cf. Amm. Marc. 25.6.2–3 (cf. Zos. 3.30.2–3), 27.10.10–15, 31.7.12.

⁹⁶ Agathias 2.7.2–7, 8.5, 9.7–9 with Cameron (1970) 48–9 for problems with Agathias' account. Cf. Veg. *Mil.* 3.17; Procop. *Wars* 8.31.6–7; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.8.28–32.

⁹⁷ Amm. Marc. 17.13.9; Veg. *Mil.* 1.26, 3.17, 19–20; Agathias 2.8.8; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.A.7.22–3. See Neckel (1918); Beck (1998); Nicasie (1998) 110–12; Wheeler (2004) 1.321–2, 342–50; Janniard (2004b).

After issuing battle orders to unit commanders, a general's capacity to control the course of events was limited. His role was primarily to direct reserves and stimulate morale by conspicuous displays of leadership. His personal entourage of *bucellarii* provided officers to whom he could delegate specific tasks as well as troops with outstanding training and weaponry skills, enabling him to intervene more effectively than as a mere personal presence; Belisarius and Narses both undertook successful tactical operations with only these immediately available troops.⁹⁸ Conveying commands and signals, both visual and oral, were important subjects in military treatises, especially in the context of the noise, confusion and stress emphasized by historical sources. The limitations of communication in battle are illustrated by Procopius' remark that by his day the various trumpet signals of the Roman army had fallen into disuse.⁹⁹ The main divisions of the Roman battle line, therefore, had a considerable degree of tactical independence in combat, and important responsibilities and critical decisions were delegated to senior and junior officers. Poor coordination between divisional commanders could be disastrous, notably at the battle of Yarmuk in 636, where a large east Roman army, deployed on broken terrain across a wide front, was destroyed piecemeal in a series of isolated actions.¹⁰⁰

As the contending armies approached, preliminary skirmishing by archers and slingers, commencing at extreme bow range (c. 300 metres), depleted enemy ranks, undermined morale and caused confusion.¹⁰¹ The effectiveness of archery might be impeded by wind conditions or even humidity.¹⁰² The Roman close-order infantry closed ranks until they were 'almost glued to one another', their disciplined and silent array potentially undermining the enemy's confidence. Such compact formations required little initiative or ability from the majority of soldiers. The less experienced were positioned in the centre of the formation, with junior officers to the front and rear, respectively the heavily armoured 'file-leaders', and the 'file-closers' who prevented flight and literally shoved men into formation. In this solution to the problem of arranging troops of varied quality, success depended less on individual weapons training and bravery than on unit cohesion, discipline and stamina (Maurice 12.B.16.20–7, 17.40–4).

Late Roman infantry usually remained stationary to receive attacks of opposing infantry, especially Germanic peoples, whose onslaughts were broken by the combination of a compact formation and a sustained barrage

⁹⁸ Procop. *Wars* 5.18.1–33; 7.1.18–21; Agathias 1.22; Cf. Julian at Amm. Marc. 16.12.28. For *bucellarii*, see Schmitt (1994).

⁹⁹ Veg. *Mil.* 2.22, 3.5; Procop. *Wars* 6.23.23–8; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 30; Maurice, *Strat.* 2.14–15, 17–20, 12.B.11.24–7, 14.2–16.7.

¹⁰⁰ Kaegi (1992) 119–34.

¹⁰¹ Veg. *Mil.* 2.17; Amm. Marc. 27.1.3; Zos. 2.18.3–4, 19.2; Procop. *Wars* 1.14.35–7, 18.31–4.

¹⁰² Procop. *Wars* 1.14.36; 4.15.41–2; Zach. *Hist. eccl.* 7.3; Maurice, *Strat.* 8.B.48, 11.1.41–2; Theophyl. Sim. 8.3.5.

of missiles. Within penetrative range of the enemy's missiles (about 120 metres), the front ranks consolidated their 'shield-wall'. Maurice calls this a *fulcum*:

the men deployed right at the very front mass their shields together until they come shield-boss to shield-boss, completely covering their stomachs almost to their shins. The men standing just behind them, raising their shields and resting them on the shield-bosses of those in front, cover their breasts and faces, and in this way they engage.

(Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.16.33–8).

The term is Germanic in origin, but Maurice's *fulcum* is not an innovation or 'barbarization'; late Roman historical narratives report comparable 'shield-walls' or 'shield-linkage', sometimes described in terms of the traditional *testudo*.¹⁰³ At Strasbourg the Roman infantry 'covering their heads with barriers of shields . . . fashioned a front with their bucklers joined fast together', until the Alamanni 'by incessant sword blows broke asunder the tightly bound structure of shields, which protected our men like a *testudo*'. The 'shield-wall' was difficult to manoeuvre but afforded protection against missiles during the last and most dangerous stage of approach, while the close-order infantry behind maintained a constant shower of javelins and *plumbatae*, and archers fired at a higher trajectory from the rear. Immediately prior to engaging, a war-cry steeled their collective spirit. If neither side broke, the front ranks engaged hand to hand with spears and *spathae*, which could penetrate armour and shatter planking shields.¹⁰⁴ The extra armour of the 'file-leaders', together with unit cohesion and often missile superiority, made the Romans much better suited to this style of warfare than many of their enemies, especially if it was prolonged beyond the initial engagement. The Roman battle lines at Strasbourg and Casilinum held even when breached by the enemy (Amm. Marc. 16.12.42–9; Agathias 2.9), and apparently only gave way at Adrianople in an untenable position after a long *mêlée* (Amm. Marc. 31.13). High levels of casualties occurred when one side broke because of numerical inferiority, doubtful morale or attacks to its flanks or rear.

Similar compact infantry formations were employed effectively throughout the period against mounted opponents. Holding firm in the face of charging cavalry was one of the most demanding tasks, but contrary to the conventional image, not only was late Roman infantry capable of standing up to cavalry attacks, but deterring cavalry was one of its primary functions. Maurice categorically states, 'Do not involve many cavalrymen in infantry battles', and believes that even the appearance of well-ordered

¹⁰³ Rance (2004a). See Amm. Marc. 16.12.36–7, 44, 29.5.47–8, 31.7.12; Agathias 2.8.4, 3.27.6; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 16.5–10. See Wheeler (1979), (2004) 1.350–3 for earlier historical development.

¹⁰⁴ Amm. Marc. 16.12.36–7. 42–51; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.A.7.57–60; B.16.39–55.

infantry would avert enemy cavalry attacks (12.B.23.14–20).¹⁰⁵ Infantry had the advantage of being able to deploy on rough terrain, but even on open ground a densely packed and well-shielded formation presented an immovable obstacle, thoroughly at odds with the see-saw nature of mounted combat. Against cavalry charges Maurice requires the front three ranks to construct a *fulcum*, a shield-wall bristling with spears, and to ‘lean their shoulders and put their weight against the shields so that they might easily endure the pressure’ (12.A.7.49–57). Again, Maurice’s *fulcum* is less novel than it appears, and recalls the tactics described in Arrian’s *Acies* (c. 135), a text Maurice appears to have known and adapted to contemporary circumstances, itself an indication of long-standing continuity in the Roman tactical response to cavalry. Historical narratives attest similar deployments; near Constantina in 502 the Roman infantry, facing Persian cavalry, ‘drew up in battle array, forming what is called a “tortoise”, and fought for a long time’ (Ps.-Joshua Stylites 51). When such formations combined with archers the effects were devastating, most famously at Taginae in 552, where the Roman line withstood the frontal charge of the Ostrogothic cavalry (Procop. *Wars* 8.29.11–21, 32.5–10). Roman infantry formations also acted as firm bulwarks behind which Roman cavalry could withdraw and regroup if pushed back.¹⁰⁶ After the defeat of the Roman cavalry at Callinicum in 531, a small force of infantry covered their retreat in a manner strikingly reminiscent of Maurice’s *fulcum*:

the infantry, and few of them indeed, were fighting against the whole Persian cavalry. Nevertheless, the enemy could neither rout them nor otherwise overpower them. For constantly massed shoulder-to-shoulder in a small space, and forming with their shields a very strong barrier, they shot at the Persians more conveniently than they were shot at by them. Frequently withdrawing, the Persians would advance against them so as to break up and destroy their line, but retired again unsuccessful.

(Procop. *Wars* 1.18.45–8)

Late Roman infantry, with sufficient training and morale, had the potential for greater cohesion and more accurate fire-power than cavalry.

Unfortunately, the only technical treatment of Roman cavalry combat comes at the very end of the period in the *Strategicon*, where the ‘composite archer-lancer’ has, in theory, subsumed the tactical roles of earlier shock and missile cavalry, though it is worth reiterating Vegetius’ satisfaction with the cavalry of his day. Maurice devotes two books (2–3) to a schematic treatment of the fundamental principles of mounted combat, which generally accord with evidence for cavalry of other periods. The ideal cavalry charge aimed to break enemy formations, both infantry and cavalry,

¹⁰⁵ Cf. A.7.68–77; cf. Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 36.

¹⁰⁶ On Maurice see Rance (2004a) 276–8, 295–304, (2005) 438–41, (2008). Amm. Marc. 16.12.37–9; Procop. *Wars* 1.18.41–8, 5.28.22–9, 8.8.16, 29–30; (probably) Theophyl. Sim. 6.9.15.

by delivering a wall of horsemen, with maximum psychological impact dependent on effective close-order manoeuvring and supporting missile fire. Loss of cohesion was a potential problem; a number of references to *cataphracti* record uncontrolled charges or disorderly withdrawals.¹⁰⁷ Consequently cavalry attacks were delivered over short distances, across level terrain and 'in good order at only a canter and not impulsively, lest the formation be disrupted by the swift pace before engaging hand-to-hand, which is a real danger' (Maurice, *Strat.* 3.5.34–6). Cavalry deployment for most of the period is obscure, but the *Strategicon* describes units up to ten deep, depth rather than length of formation being conducive to cohesion while manoeuvring, though this depth could be reduced in élite regiments; 'since very few outstanding soldiers are found in any unit, namely the file-leaders, those who must engage hand-to-hand, it is necessary to regulate the depth according to the quality of the units' (Maurice, *Strat.* 2.6; cf. Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 17). As in infantry formations, experienced and heavily armoured junior officers formed the front rank, sometimes additionally equipped with shields; indeed it appears that junior cavalry officers were collectively called *cataphractarii* even in units not so designated. Maurice has the lighter-armed men in the centre of the formation fire barrages of arrows overhead to further disconcert the enemy during the attack, though in the fourth and fifth centuries, and probably even in Maurice's day also, this role would be assigned to supporting units of specialist archers, whether Roman *sagittarii* or allies.¹⁰⁸

The essential factor in these provisions was the extreme fluidity and unpredictability of mounted combat, especially in the early stages of battle when opposing cavalry forces endeavoured to drive one another from the field. In these circumstances hand-to-hand fighting in a *mêlée* was both brief and volatile. Maintaining or regaining the impetus of the attack was the single most important consideration. Maurice characterizes mounted combat as a series of 'pursuits and counter-pursuits', and this 'see-saw' nature is recorded by contemporary historians, especially Procopius, who notes 'the battle had become a fierce close-quarters fight. And each side kept making quickly-turning pursuits of one another, since they were all cavalry', and 'when the opposing forces advanced, each hesitated and kept advancing in turn as their opponents retired, and consumed much time in retreats and counter-pursuits and quickly-turning manoeuvres'.¹⁰⁹ The best Roman cavalry units were trained to regulate their withdrawals and

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Nazarius, *Pan. Lat.* 4 (10).24; Amm. Marc. 16.12.37–9, 25.1.7–9; Procop. *Wars* 1.18.37–48, 5.29.35–40.

¹⁰⁸ Mazzucchi (1981) 125–7; Rea (1984); Speidel (1984a) 154–5; (2000); Zuckerman (1994a); Maurice, *Strat.* 2.8, 3.1–4, 5.26–36. Compare, perhaps, Julian. *Or.* 2.57C–D; Agathias 2.8.1.

¹⁰⁹ Maurice, *Strat.* 3.15.14; Procop. *Wars* 1.15.15, 8.8.20; cf. Veg. *Mil.* 1.27; Procop. *Wars* 3.18.5–11, 19.11–24, 30–2; 6.2.11–12; Georg. Pis. *Exp. Pers.* 2.153–8.

renew their attack. At Tricamerum in 533 the Roman cavalry made three consecutive charges against the Vandal line, each time involving more Roman units (Procop. *Wars* 4.3.10–15).¹¹⁰ With these characteristics in mind Maurice stresses the importance of deploying cavalry in more than one line, especially when fighting the Avars. Ideally, if the first line failed to rout the enemy in its initial charge it should fall back and wheel around upon the pursuing enemy; the second line should engage only when the first had made several attempts to regroup and re-engage (*Strat.* 2.1–2, 13, 3.8–12, 15).

Ultimately, it is because of the volatile nature of mounted combat that Maurice, despite providing theoretical models for all-cavalry forces relevant to different eventualities, rarely envisages their practical application in the field without the presence of an infantry force as a fixed rallying point. The clearest indication of the hazards involved is the regularity with which cavalry transformed itself into infantry.¹¹¹ An action in Lazica in 550 is particularly instructive, where Roman and allied cavalry, finding themselves suddenly outnumbered by Persian horseman, dismounted and

arrayed themselves on foot in a phalanx as deep as possible, and all stood forming a close front against the enemy and thrusting out their spears against them. And the Persians did not know what to do, for they were unable to charge their opponents now that they were on foot, nor could they break up the phalanx.

(Procop. *Wars* 8.8.31–4)

In moments of crisis or uncertainty – having lost impetus or on rough terrain – or simply where tactically beneficial, late Roman cavalry preferred the advantages that infantry possessed over cavalry. Although in all cases this was expedient rather than desirable, it was nevertheless a rarer phenomenon in previous centuries, and should perhaps modify strict categorizations of ‘infantry’ and ‘cavalry’ in late antiquity.¹¹²

Roman cavalry also operated in various ‘irregular’ or non-linear formations, including the traditional so-called *cuneus* or ‘wedge’, and the *drungus*, first attested in the late fourth century but almost certainly older. The term *drungus*, originally military slang of Gaulish origin, applied to a flexible grouping most suitable for ambushes and surprise attacks, and especially important in sudden outflanking manoeuvres on the battlefield.¹¹³ The capabilities of Roman cavalry in various stratagems appear

¹¹⁰ See also cavalry combat at Dara in Procop. *Wars* 1.14.45–51.

¹¹¹ Julian. *Or.* 1.36D, 2.60A; Procop. *Wars* 1.18.41–8, 8.35.19; Malalas 18.60 Thurn = 464.14–465.1 Dindorf; Theophyl. Sim. 2.4.5–7; Maurice, *Strat.* 7.B.11.45–52, 8.B.85, 11.1.64–7, 3.7–9, 12.A.7.83–7, B.13.19–20. See Rance (2005) 459–62.

¹¹² For late Roman cavalry attacking as infantry: Procop. *Wars* 4.11.50–6; Theophyl. Sim. 7.2.1–9. For infantry serving as cavalry: Procop. *Wars* 5.28.21, 7.18.15–16. For instances in earlier Roman history, see McCall (2002) 69–72.

¹¹³ Veg. *Mil.* 3.16, 19; Maurice, *Strat.* 3.5.63–75, 3.14, 4.5. For such tactics, see e.g. Procop. *Wars* 1.14.33, 39–42. See Rance (2004b).

to broaden through contact with peoples with steppe antecedents, such as the Huns, Ostrogoths and possibly the Danubian Sarmatians. This was particularly the case with feigned flight, which Roman authors regularly designate 'Scythian' or 'barbarian', in which cavalry simulated retreat and then wheeled about upon their disorganized pursuers, sometimes in combination with concealed ambushers.¹¹⁴ This extremely difficult manoeuvre, always liable to degenerate into genuine retreat, was rare among earlier Roman cavalry, the first clear instance being Aurelian's defeat of Palmyrene *cataphracts* at Immae in 272 (Zos. 1.50.3–4).¹¹⁵ Thereafter the effective use of feigned flight is frequently recorded and deemed by tactical authors to be within the capabilities of Roman cavalry, a testament to their training and coordination.¹¹⁶ Late Persian cavalry appears to have developed similar tactics.¹¹⁷

Roman cavalry was responsible for transforming the enemy's defeat into a decisive rout. Throughout the period, accepting the victors' hyperbole, the Romans' ability to maximize victories is indicated in typically asymmetrical losses; at Strasbourg 243 Roman soldiers and four senior officers were killed, perhaps 1,000 total casualties, while the Alamanni lost 6,000–8,000. Outside Ctesiphon in 363, 2,500 Persians were killed in flight compared with around 70 Romans, and similarly 800 Vandal dead to 50 Romans at Tricamerum. The two-thirds of the Roman army killed at Adrianople, however, was an exceptional massacre.¹¹⁸ Maurice vigorously condemns the current Roman practice of disorganized and limited follow-ups (*Strat.* 3.11, 7.B.12, 11.2.55–65). Certainly several sixth-century victories proved indecisive or transitory, often when victorious troops turned aside prematurely to plunder the enemy's dead and baggage, behaviour that the military penal code equated to desertion, likewise meriting capital punishment.¹¹⁹ The problem was neither universal nor new, however; Maurice's criticisms relate rather to contemporary conditions, notably the ability of defeated 'Scythian' peoples to turn suddenly upon their pursuers. In this context he outlines tactical arrangements in which *cursores* and *defensores* cooperate in operations that are neither partial nor reckless, though in large part these

¹¹⁴ Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 40; Maurice, *Strat.* 2.1.44–51, 4.2–3, 11.3.33, 11.4.124–7. Sarmatians: Arr. *Tact.* 44.1; Amm. Marc. 17.12.3.

¹¹⁵ Downey (1950); Watson (1999) 73–5; cf. Joseph. *BJ* 4.1.8 (60) 7.4 (421–36).

¹¹⁶ Ps.-Joshua Stylites 75; Malalas 18.65 Thurn = 468.15–21 Dindorf; Agathias 1.22; Theophyl. Sim. 2.17.10–11; Georg. Pis. *Exp. Pers.* 3.186–219 (= Theophanes, *Chron.* 305.24–306.2, Am 6113); Zonaras 13.5.

¹¹⁷ Malalas 18.60 Thurn = 4.63.15–20 Dindorf; Theophanes, *Chron.* 313.16–314.21, Am 6116; Tha'alabi, *Histoire*, 647.

¹¹⁸ Amm. Marc. 16.12.63, 24.6.15, 31.13.18; Lib. *Or.* 18.60; Zos. 3.25; Procop. *Wars* 4.3.18. For casualty figures, see Mazzucchi (1981) 136–7.

¹¹⁹ Ps.-Joshua Stylites 51; Procop. *Wars* 1.14.53, 4.4.1–9, 5.29.25–34, 38–42; Theophyl. Sim. 2.4.1–4; Maurice, *Strat.* 1.8.16, 7.A.14, 9.2.62–6, 9.3.50–61, 11.7–21.

merely reiterate the combined tactics of Roman 'light' and 'heavy' cavalry of the Principate.¹²⁰

The disparity in casualties reflects the opportunity afforded the victors to treat their wounded and finish off the enemy's. Roman casualties were also less likely to prove fatal given the existence of medical orderlies to remove the wounded even during combat and the continued provision of impressive medical expertise into the sixth century.¹²¹ The fate of prisoners varied considerably according to circumstances; the long Roman tradition of enlisting captives certainly continued, while Romans who fell into barbarian hands could expect a life of slavery or to be ransomed according to treaty terms.¹²² The civil wars of the period were usually followed by reconciliatory measures, at least for the lower ranks, though soldiers who deserted from Roman service to fight alongside barbarians or rebels received no mercy even after surrender.¹²³ Roman regulations required that booty collected from the battlefield be distributed equitably at the conclusion of the campaign, though officers were often unable or unwilling to curtail plundering; Procopius graphically describes the complete collapse of Roman discipline in the captured Vandal camp at Tricamerum (4.4.1–8). For barbarians superior Roman equipment could be a valuable supplement to resources – in this way the Goths rearmed themselves prior to Adrianople – and was significant in the diffusion of military technology between peoples.¹²⁴ Finally, although detailed information is lacking and physical remains continue to elude archaeologists, Roman commanders attached great importance to appropriate arrangements for the dead. These satisfied religious observance and reassured survivors, but also concealed losses from the enemy, the Persians also being meticulous in retrieving bodies apparently for this purpose.¹²⁵

V. TRAINING, MORALE AND MOTIVATION

Having considered the varied roles and capabilities of Roman troops in combat, it is necessary to assess how they were prepared for action. Narrative

¹²⁰ Maurice, *Strat.* 3.5.37–50, 11.2.92–5; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.A.7.23–49 reiterates Arr. *Acies contra Alanos* 27–30. For effective pursuit see e.g. Procop. *Wars* 8.32.22–8.

¹²¹ Davies (1989a); Elton (1996b) 90; Veg. *Mil.* 2.10, 3.2; Amm. Marc. 16.6.2, 19.2.15; Malalas 12.36 Thurn = 304.22–305.2 Dindorf Theophyl. Sim. 2.6.10–12; Maurice, *Strat.* 2.9, 7.B.6, 8.B.43. Procop. *Wars* 6.2.15–18, 25–32 describes sophisticated surgery corresponding to medical treatises on missile wounds; see Celsus, *Med.* 7.4.D5–C2; Paul. Aeg. 6.88.2. See generally Salazar (2000) 34–6.

¹²² Elton (1996b) 129–35, 185.

¹²³ Amm. Marc. 29.5.19–24; Procop. *Wars* 8.32.20–1.

¹²⁴ Amm. Marc. 31.5.9, 6.3; see also Oros. 7.34.5 on Huns and Alans; Joh. Eph. *Hist. eccl.* 6.10 on Persians; 6.25 on Slavs. For Roman reuse of captured Persian equipment see *SHA Alex. Sev.* 56.5, but Zos. 3.18.6 for Julian destroying Persian equipment because 'unsuitable'.

¹²⁵ Amm. Marc. 17.1.1, 25.6.4, 31.7.16; Zos. 3.30.4; Maurice, *Strat.* 7.B.6, 8.A.16. For Persians, see Zach. *Hist. eccl.* 9.3; Evagrius 5.14; Maurice, *Strat.* 11.1.10; but see Tabari I. 2319 (p. 108).

historical sources rarely refer to military training and it is often impossible to identify specific practices in their general vocabulary. Vegetius' *Epitoma* is usually cited as the principal source for late Roman infantry training, but his reconstruction of an ancient training regime is not necessarily evidence for contemporary procedures. Moreover, his primary concern is the basic weapons training of new recruits, with a near-complete neglect of tactical training and field manoeuvres (1.8–28, 2.23, 3.4). Maurice's *Strategicon* suggests broad continuity in basic training up to the late sixth century, which combined regular trials of fitness with exercises in a range of weapons, including one-to-one combat with an opponent (1.1, 12.B.2–3). There are, nevertheless, some changes of emphasis. Special arrangements for archery training developed range, accuracy and hitting power. Syrianus includes a notable four-chapter section devoted to all aspects of archery instruction, which appears to rework an earlier introductory manual, while Maurice requires that all Roman cavalry recruits up to the age of forty receive some training with a bow.¹²⁶ Changes in tactical training are also identifiable. Vegetius typically bemoans the demise of *armatura*, an advanced exercise combining tactical drill with controlled close-quarters combat. Previously a universal requirement, by Vegetius' day *armatura* was a purely festive display by specialists (1.13, 2.23). This was due to its tactical redundancy, however, rather than reprehensible neglect and relates to long-term changes in which individual weapons skills and the operations of tactical sub-units became less significant. In contrast the *Strategicon* outlines contemporary close-order infantry drills conducted by *campidoctores*,¹²⁷ which continued to distinguish Roman from barbarian (12.B.14–17, 24).

Given Vegetius' lack of interest in cavalry, the *Strategicon* provides the bulk of information regarding late Roman cavalry training (1.1, 3.1–7, 6.1–5). Maurice describes a number of drills that expressly belong to an earlier period and exhibit some resemblance to exercises dating to the Principate (6.1). Some of these appear in other late Roman sources as part of the cavalry games traditionally held in spring.¹²⁸ Although Maurice calls these 'additional and non-essential', their practical utility should not be underestimated, as they developed unit identity and cohesion, and routinely rehearsed tactical procedures which he elsewhere deems fundamental, such as pursuing defeated opponents or regrouping in the event of enemy recovery or ambush.¹²⁹ Maurice's detailed treatment of cavalry training, however, reflects more recent military developments, and in particular the influence of Avar mounted tactics. The distinct tactical roles earlier served by

¹²⁶ Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 44–7; Maurice, *Strat.* 1.1, 2.28–34. Schissel von Fleschenberg (1941–2); Amatuuccio (1996) 74–80.

¹²⁷ Horsmann (1991) 101–2, 146–8; Rance (2000) 247–52. On *campidoctores*, see Rance (forthcoming).

¹²⁸ Greg. Nyss. *In Quad. Martyres*, PG 46, col. 773; Agathias 2.1.2; *Miracula S. Anastasii Persae* 23.

¹²⁹ Speidel (1996a); Rance (2000) 251–4.

different cavalry types or allied contingents came to be required, at least in theory, of all recruits, who trained both as *cursores* and *defensores*, skirmishers and close-order cavalry, exchanging positions to ensure a broad experience and proficiency at regimental, brigade and divisional level. To enhance the tactical versatility of the individual trooper, while increasing coordination both within and between units, Roman troops simulated enemy formations or represented neighbouring units in the Roman battle line, so that recruits could understand the spaces available for deploying and manoeuvring.¹³⁰ Cavalry units were especially required to practise withdrawing, wheeling about and renewing the attack, manoeuvres essential to maintaining momentum in mounted combat, as well as *ad hoc* exercises in irregular formations.¹³¹

There is evidence for continuity in field training, previously called *ambulatio*, *decurtio* or *decursus*, equating to 'manoeuvres' in modern military parlance. These large-scale exercises combined route marches over different types of terrain with tactical deployment for both infantry and cavalry. They might also be the occasion for large-scale mock battles, which trained units to cooperate in a battle line, offered a psychological taste of combat, and tested officers' skills of command. There was a long tradition of simulated combat in the Roman army, which was designed to bring all ranks, recruit and veteran, away from parade-ground drill and to minimize the shocks and imponderables of battle.¹³² A related aspect of Roman cavalry training was large-scale hunting, which provided tactical experience and weapons training of marked realism.¹³³ Military authors had a long-standing interest in *cynegetica* or hunting treatises. The detailed description of a *grande chasse* appended to the *Strategicon*, however, is unprecedented, involving up to a thousand cavalrymen in a gradually contracting ring over seven or eight miles, which rehearsed tactics for enveloping enemy formations and rounding up captives for interrogation (12.D). The explicit similarity to the 'Scythian battle line' suggests a Hunnic origin, a hypothesis supported by its close resemblance to the later Mongolian *nerge* – a combination of military training and hunting expedition – the Roman army having re-created a practice whose origin lay in nomadic steppe society.¹³⁴

Success in combat is undoubtedly determined to a very large degree by troops' morale and *esprit de corps*. Late Roman commanders, no less than in any other period, were interested in ways of motivating men, often frightened or disaffected, by various incentives and deterrents, while simultaneously breaking the enemy's confidence. Modern assessments of the morale

¹³⁰ Maurice, *Strat.* 3.5.87–99, 114–19, 12.B.17.1–13. Rance (2000) 234–6.

¹³¹ Maurice, *Strat.* 3.5.63–76, 86–109, 4.5.

¹³² Veg. *Mil.* 1.27, 3.9; Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.17.1–13; Georg. Pis. *Exp. Pers.* 2.120–62; Rance (2000).

¹³³ Amm. Marc. 24.5.2; Zos. 3.23.1–2; Procop. *Wars* 2.21.2; Theophyl. Sim. 6.2.2–3, 7.2.11–13, 7.4, with Whitby (1988) 101–2. See Junkelmann (1998) 1.157–73.

¹³⁴ Rance (2000) 254–8.

of ancient armies risk devolving into generalities and anachronisms based on modern psychological frameworks, but it is possible to identify broad factors inhibiting or promoting morale in combat during this period.¹³⁵ Traditionally the *disciplina* of long-service professionals was for Roman authors the quality that most distinguished Roman troops from barbarians, though the distinction is to some extent rhetorical. Contemporary sources bemoan declining discipline, which appears to have been a genuine concern, especially in the sixth century, though it would be easy to exaggerate the problem. Certainly there are instances of soldierly indiscipline, particularly among 'barbarian' soldiers billeted upon civilian populations, but similar criticisms echo throughout Roman history.¹³⁶ Ultimately, there is no evidence that this off-the-field indiscipline led to poor performance in combat; it was perhaps even a good indication of martial temperament. Discipline and motivation in the field combined persuasion and example with compulsion and punishment, and depended considerably on the authority of the commander and his officers, and the quality of the troops, especially when armies contained large allied contingents. At least until the fourth century poor performance in battle was deterred by traditional threats, humiliations and exemplary punishments, often meted out to whole regiments to encourage collective responsibility and unit loyalty. Capital punishment was now rare and decimation unheard of, though both remained regulation penalties.¹³⁷ There were problems in sixth-century service conditions related to lengthy overseas campaigns, notably deficient pay and irregular supplies, which contributed in different circumstances to military unrest.¹³⁸ Desertion and mutiny were hardly new phenomena, however, nor are they necessarily indicative of low morale. The mutinous Balkan army of 602 was well trained, tactically cohesive and recently victorious over Avars and Slavs.

It has often been assumed that the heterogeneous ethnic composition of later Roman armies affected their performance in combat. The traditional image of inherently unreliable 'barbarian' troops corrupting Roman discipline, training and morale is part of a perceived late Roman military malaise, alongside indiscipline, unsuitable recruits and draft-dodging.¹³⁹ Given the long-term focus of recruitment on rural, less 'Romanized' regions of the empire, Roman armies had for long successfully accommodated ethnically

¹³⁵ Lee (1996) offers an excellent framework. For refreshing criticism of the fashionable 'face of battle' approach, see Wheeler (1998), (2001); Lendon (2004) 443–7.

¹³⁶ Wheeler (1996).

¹³⁷ Humiliations: Zos. 3.3.4–5; 4.9.2–4; Amm. Marc. 29.1.7–9. See Maurice, *Strat.* 1.6–8 for penalties including capital punishment, and decimation at 1.8.17. See Giuffrida (1985); Lee (1996) 203–6; though for capital or corporal punishment see Amm. Marc. 24.3.1–2, 29.5.22–4, 31, 49; Procop. *Wars* 3.12.7–22, 4.18.8; Agathias 2.7; Theophyl. Sim. 6.9.15, 7.4.6.

¹³⁸ Kaegi (1981) 41–63.

¹³⁹ For this traditional view see e.g. Ferrill (1986); Southern and Dixon (1996) 52–5; Richardot (2001) 63–73, 293–318.

diverse recruits even without recourse to 'external' barbarians, who once recruited, often into élite units, rarely remained ethnically distinct.¹⁴⁰ There is also no evidence that the Roman army's cooperation with varied allied forces under their own commanders, raised *ad hoc* for particular campaigns, was detrimental to its performance in combat. With significant exceptions, 'barbarian' warriors employed similar weaponry to Roman soldiers; any diversity in tactics or equipment, such as Hunnic horse-archers, increased rather than reduced operational capabilities. Federates and allies may well have been less subject to Roman military discipline and lacked certain skills, notably the engineering expertise required to entrench and palisade camps that was traditionally a mark of Roman training and discipline.¹⁴¹ Vegetius, perhaps wilfully, misses the point, however, that a Goth could be entirely ignorant of Roman training and still be an expert warrior; Vegetius himself compliments the Alans, Huns and Goths as cavalry (1.20). Furthermore, battle tactics for much of the period, certainly among infantry, were relatively unsophisticated. Aëtius' notoriously heterogeneous army at Châlons in 451 was very different in composition and appearance from Julian's at Strasbourg in 357, but they probably fought these battles in much the same way, with a tightly packed line of infantry serving both as a barrier to enemy assaults and a fixed base from which cavalry could launch tactical strikes.¹⁴² Ultimately, unit morale and cohesion were more important than uniformity and ethnic homogeneity throughout the army as a whole. Long-standing Roman organizational practices, such as the *contubernium* of 'tent-mates', and clothing and shields of distinct regimental colours, continued to reinforce small-scale unit identity.

Late Roman military treatises typically stress troop quality over quantity, but their authors realistically presumed the presence of poor or inexperienced soldiers in every unit. A commander therefore had to be familiar with certain morale-boosting measures. His personal and patronal links throughout the army were important stimuli in combat; his presence or participation could induce troops to fight with greater determination, though endangering himself was considered foolhardy, and his actual or rumoured death could cause panic.¹⁴³ Frequent instances in contemporary histories of the general's pre-battle speech are difficult to assess in view of their long literary tradition, but it was a regular procedure, especially prior to hazardous operations, for commanders to single out veterans or to affirm the loyalty

¹⁴⁰ Whitby (1995) 103–10, (2004) 165–70; Elton (1996b) 136–52; Nicasie (1998) 107–16.

¹⁴¹ Veg. *Mil.* 1.21–5, 3.8; Amm. Marc. 18.2.6; cf. Men. Prot. fr. 23.3 for Maurice's 'restoration' of earlier practices.

¹⁴² Jord. *Get.* 36.38–41. The recent reconstruction of Châlons by Richardot (2001) 327–41 as a contest between two gigantic cavalry armies is not supported by the evidence for this campaign or the period as a whole.

¹⁴³ Procop. *Wars* 5.18.4–15, 6.27.12–14, 7.5.10–16; Malalas 18.60 Thurn = 463.23–464.5 Dindorf; Agathias 5.23.3; Joh. Eph. *Hist. eccl.* 6.26; Maurice, *Strat.* 2.16, 12.B.11.18–24; Theophyl. Sim. 2.3.10–13; Theophanes, *Chron.* 318.19–28 (AM 6118).

and morale of their troops by swearing additional oaths. Generals are also recorded scrutinizing their forces' attitude to combat and even leaving men behind because of their 'feebleness of spirit', and it was customary to assign the poorest men in each unit to baggage duty during combat.¹⁴⁴

As with soldiers of all periods, the most profound motivation was material, which included the pay and provisions due from central administration. In the field a general could raise morale by distributing recently captured booty or dispensing rewards for outstanding conduct, which tended to replace formal decorations. Most graphically, before the battle of Taginae, Narses rode along the Roman lines 'holding aloft on poles bracelets and necklaces and gold girdles and displayed certain other incentives to bravery in danger' (Procop. *Wars* 8.31.9).¹⁴⁵ Problems in distributing booty resulted in disaffection, apparently the direct cause of the Roman defeat by the Moors at Cillium in 544 (Procop. *Wars* 4.21.23–8).¹⁴⁶ In the sixth century especially, soldiers fighting far from home, chronically underpaid and poorly provisioned, naturally felt irritation when deprived of the additional benefits for which they endangered themselves.

Preparing troops for combat had to balance the demands of discipline and order with the necessary bloodlust and mass demonstrations of collective determination. Fourth-century Roman troops used the *barritus*, a war-cry of Germanic origin probably originating among Rhineland *auxilia*, which began low and crescendoed to loud roaring.¹⁴⁷ This was later replaced by a variety of Christian slogans. Frequent shouting, however, was considered detrimental to discipline, generating alarm or impetuosity, and war-cries were permitted only immediately prior to engagement. Such restraint was a considerable feat, especially in the presence of less disciplined allies, and given that Roman enemies habitually employed terrifying war-cries.¹⁴⁸

An alternative channelling of violent emotions were organized sessions of reviling the enemy, often focusing on martial displays or duels enacted between the battle lines, events that Procopius in particular chose to emphasize. These single combats were undoubtedly expressions of personal bravery or enmity, and are usually seen as reflections of the martial values of 'non-Romans' serving in Roman armies. They were effective in goading soldiers into a state of battle-readiness, but often served to delay combat to await reinforcements or outflanking manoeuvres. Procopius' 'Homerizing'

¹⁴⁴ Hansen (1993); Amm. Marc. 16.12.8–13, 29–34; Veg. *Mil.* 3.12; Procop. *Wars* 7.5.7–9; Theophyl. Sim. 1.15.15, 2.10.8–9, 3.7.8–10, 15; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Rhet. mil.* 50.1; *Peri strat.* 39.5–12; *Naum.* 9.18; Maurice, *Strat.* 8.A.29, B.70; 9.3.62–74; 12.B.9.9–10.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Amm. Marc. 24.4.24, 26–7, 6.16; Zos. 5.46.5; Procop. *Wars* 7.1.8; Theophyl. Sim. 2.6.10–11, 6.7.6–8.3.

¹⁴⁶ Though apparently in accordance with standard procedure, as 6.7.33–4; cf. also Theophyl. Sim. 6.7.6–8.3.

¹⁴⁷ Tac. *Germ.* 3; Amm. Marc. 16.12.43, 31.7.11; Veg. *Mil.* 3.18. See Alföldi (1959).

¹⁴⁸ Amm. Marc. 27.10.10, 28.5.6, 31.7.11, 12.11; Veg. *Mil.* 3.18; Men. Prot. fr. 12.3; Theophyl. Sim. 5.9.5–7; Maurice, *Strat.* 2.17–18, 11.4.53–9, 12.B.11.24–7.

should not mislead; he vividly dramatizes monomachy partly for literary effect, partly because of his close connections with the very cavalry officers from whose ranks these champions emerged.¹⁴⁹ Such individual bravado could not be more removed from the prosaic unit discipline and cohesion of the *Strategicon*, and indeed expressly contravenes its precepts (I.8.16, II.16–22, 17.51–5, D.26–35). Furthermore, similar instances of duelling throughout Roman military history cast doubt on any characterization of late antiquity as a period of especially ‘heroic’ combat, an impression in some measure inspired by the vaguely ‘Arthurian’ associations of late Roman warfare.¹⁵⁰

Similarly, while Christian religious ceremony, imagery and belief offered another source of reassurance, late Roman soldiers were never ‘proto-crusaders’. Maurice requires all soldiers to attend pre-battle services, where regimental chaplains, probably introduced by Constantine I, blessed each unit’s standard (2.18.13–23, 7.A.1).¹⁵¹ Generals sought divine aid for their armies through the collection and display of icons and relics, though their popularity is difficult to assess. Although these measures represent genuine conviction of the importance of heavenly protection, no Roman military author saw faith or ideology as substitutes in combat for training and discipline.¹⁵² An exception may be found in the early Islamic armies that inflicted such devastating defeats on the Romans in the 630s–640s. While *jihād* would be an anachronistic concept in this period, Islam does seem to have conferred on Muslim Arabs advantages in morale, cohesion and leadership, possibly the only respects in which they were identifiably superior to their opponents in combat.¹⁵³ It is interesting to note that morale-boosting Christian motifs are most clearly stressed in Roman campaigns against the Persians, whose state-sponsored Zoroastrianism offered a religious counterpart, but whose military methods, of all the late empire’s opponents, also differed the least from Roman practices. Both possessed comparable capabilities in logistics, field engineering, siegecraft, cavalry deployment and military literature, which marked them out from other nations.

At the end of this period Roman cavalry was attempting to develop more sophisticated tactics based on Avaric models, but in the long term what really differentiated Roman forces in combat – infantry and cavalry – was their continued training in close-order manoeuvres and tactics,

¹⁴⁹ Procop. *Wars* I.13.29–39, 4.13.5–17, 24.9–15, 5.18.18, 29.20–1, 7.4.19–31, 8.8.25–8, 31.11–21, 35.11; Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.14, 6.9, cf. Sebeos 28 (trans. 52–3); Theophanes, *Chron.* 318.19–28 (AM 6118). Cameron (1970) 47–8, (1985) 202–4; Trombley (2002) 246–7; Rance (2005) 428–9.

¹⁵⁰ Glück (1964); Oakley (1985).

¹⁵¹ Corippus, *Iohannis* 8.206–388; for chaplains: Jones (1953); Dennis (1993) with *Miracula S. Anastasii Persae* 14, *Maximi Confessoris Acta*, PG 90, col. 168c.

¹⁵² Theophyl. Sim. 2.3.4–9, 3.1.11–12; Corippus, *Iohannis* 8.206–388; Georg. Pis. *Exp. Pers.* I.139–50, 2.86–7, *Heraclias* 212–15; Theoph. *Chron.* 298.15–16 (AM 6102); Whitby (1998) 192–5.

¹⁵³ Kaegi (1992) 127–44, 265–76; Kennedy (2001) 1–14.

underpinned by military discipline, drill and tradition. Although conspicuous disasters like Adrianople and Yarmuk provide convenient chronological points in the long story of Roman 'decline and fall', put simply, over this period the Roman army won far more actions than it lost, and the worst casualties of most of its defeats were trained personnel and Roman prestige rather than territory and cities. Above all, late Roman armies were of necessity highly adaptable to combat against very different enemies on various types of terrain, and that Roman ability 'to adapt' (*harmozesthai*) to enemy strengths and weaknesses underlies Maurice's analysis of the diverse fighting methods of hostile nations. Insofar as battles and sieges win wars, these are more important considerations in assessing the nature of contemporary combat than traditional and simplistic notions of late Roman 'defeat', for which broader strategic and political circumstances offer better contexts and explanations.

CHAPTER 11

WARFARE AND THE STATE

A. D. LEE

The relationship between war and the state was always a close one throughout Roman history, but never more so than during late antiquity. Indeed, one might legitimately talk in terms of an increased degree of militarization of the Roman state in this period. The impetus in this direction came during the mid-third century when the Empire faced severe strategic problems, both externally and internally. The empire's frontiers suffered repeated breaches by a resurgent Persia to the east and by confederations of Germanic tribes to the north, while the inability of the central government to deal satisfactorily with these problems led to the emergence of independent 'Gallic' and 'Palmyrene' empires which broke away from centralized authority in the west and east respectively, raising the very real danger that the empire might fragment permanently. That this potential scenario did not occur was largely the result of the efforts of the so-called 'soldier emperors' of the late 260s, 270s and 280s who gradually reunited the empire and restored its fortunes. The most successful of these, Diocletian, expanded the size of the army and overhauled the Empire's fiscal system to meet the army's needs more closely. Symptomatic of this prioritization of military needs was the way in which, by the late third century, even service in the Empire's civilian bureaucracy came to be referred to as a form of *militia*, the term traditionally used of service in the army, with civil servants being treated as a type of quasi-soldier complete with rations, uniform and military belt (*cingulum*).¹ Even if after the fourth century the great majority of emperors refrained from direct involvement in military campaigning and civilian power was reasserted, especially in the east, the Empire continued to experience periodic crises of various sorts and so the fundamental institutional priorities established in the late third century remained in place, just as the administrative fiction of civil servants as soldiers persisted. The sixth century even witnessed the extension of militarization into new areas, with Justinian amalgamating civilian and military responsibilities in a substantial number of provinces, and military commanders dominating the

¹ Jones (1964) 566; Brennan (1996) 154, 157.

civilian administration in the newly reconquered regions of north Africa, Italy and south-eastern Spain.²

The theme of this chapter is, then, one which can be studied particularly fruitfully in the late Roman context.³ Of the various directions in which the theme can be pursued, perhaps the most obvious is the question of how the late Roman state extracted the necessary resources from the empire to maintain the army and engage in war making. There is also, of course, the important question of the extent to which military factors contributed to the collapse and disappearance of the Roman state in the west in the fifth century, and its corresponding survival in the east. These are issues addressed later in this chapter,⁴ but the point of departure is the interrelationship between military and political power in late antiquity, first, with reference to the legitimization of the emperor's position, and second, with reference to the scope for military challenges to imperial power.

I. THE MILITARY BASIS OF IMPERIAL POWER

During the early Empire the relationship between military and political power was particularly evident in two interrelated areas. Maintenance of the emperor's political position was dependent to a significant degree on the projection of an image of military success, an essential ingredient in the legitimization of his rule,⁵ but also on retaining the loyalty of the army.⁶ The former aspect was epitomized by the victory monuments on display for all to see in the city of Rome, such as the arches of Titus and Septimius Severus and the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, the latter rather less publicly by Septimius' alleged deathbed advice to his sons – 'Be harmonious, enrich the soldiers, and despise all the rest.'⁷

Events during the course of the third century intensified the importance of both these aspects. Military defeats on an unprecedented scale raised serious doubts about the integrity of the imperial office, while the often desperate military circumstances of the Empire in this period, particularly during the 260s and 270s, meant that the legions came to play a critical role in its survival, one of the corollaries of which was a strengthened conviction on their part that it was their right to determine who should be emperor.

² Jones (1964) 280–2, 656; Brown (1984) ch. 3. Note that there is debate as to whether late Roman society (as opposed to the state) should be regarded as becoming increasingly militarized (Whitby (2000a) 481–2) or undergoing demilitarization (Liebeschuetz (1990) 1–4, (2001) 403).

³ Cf. Cameron (1995) for a valuable collection of relevant papers.

⁴ However, since ch. 8 on military forces and ch. 12 on war and society in this volume give consideration to issues relating to recruitment and conscription, the relevant section of the present chapter will focus on the subject of material, as opposed to human, resources.

⁵ Gagé (1933); McCormick (1986) ch. 1.

⁶ Campbell (1984).

⁷ Dio Cass. 76.15.2; cf. Suet. *Calig.* 46, and Justin II's advice to Tiberius at the time of his appointment as Caesar, or 'junior' emperor, in 574, which, among other maxims, included 'Pay attention to your army' (Theophyl. Sim. 3.11.11; Joh. Eph. *Hist. eccl.* 3.5).

Understandably, they wanted to be led by men who would ensure victory, and so practical military experience and ability became crucial criteria in the selection of emperors. As a result fewer and fewer emperors were drawn from the traditional pool of aristocratic senatorial candidates, and more and more were chosen from the officer corps of the army, many of whom had risen by merit through the ranks from quite humble backgrounds. A harbinger of what was to come was provided by the overthrow of the emperor Severus Alexander by a military officer, Maximinus the Thracian, in 235:

Maximinus' army was now in sight and the young recruits began to call out [to the soldiers in Alexander's army], urging their fellow soldiers to desert their 'mean little sissy' or their 'timid little lad tied to his mother's apron strings' and to come over to the side of a man who was brave and moderate, always their companion in battle and devoted to a life of military action. The soldiers were persuaded, and abandoning Alexander, they joined Maximinus who was universally acclaimed as emperor.

(Herodian 6.9.5, Loeb trans.)

Emperors of senatorial origin continued to predominate for the next three decades, but the nadir of the Empire's fortunes during the 260s brought a clear shift in the social origin of the holders of the imperial office. Claudius II Gothicus (268–70), Aurelian (270–5), Probus (276–82) and Carus (282–3) were all men whose military abilities enabled them to gain the throne despite coming from families of undistinguished social status; these were the 'soldier emperors' largely responsible for the Empire's recovery during the 270s and 280s. As one fourth-century commentator grudgingly conceded, 'although they were deficient in culture, they had nevertheless been sufficiently schooled by the hardships of the countryside and of military service to be the best men for the state' (Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39). Diocletian, who may, according to one source, have been of servile origin (Eutr. 9.22), is rightly regarded as the most successful of these 'soldier emperors' because, among other things, he managed to retain power for more than twenty years (284–305), an achievement due in part to his willingness to share it with three co-emperors from similar backgrounds to himself – the so-called tetrarchs. The famous porphyry sculpture of them which now adorns St Mark's in Venice (part of the booty carried to the west by the crusaders who sacked Constantinople in 1204) exemplifies this change in the type of men who now held the imperial office. The embrace of the figures was no doubt intended to convey a strong visual message about tetrarchic solidarity, but what is equally striking is their practical military attire (fig. 8.16). Their military pedigree and identification with their troops was also projected in contemporary depictions of their campaigning which emphasized their close involvement in the actual fighting, as in the following example concerning the activities of Diocletian's colleague Maximian on the Rhine

frontier in the late 280s: 'What need of a multitude [of troops] when you yourself took part in the fray, when you yourself did battle in each spot and over the whole battlefield, and you yourself ran to counter the foe everywhere, both where he resisted, and where he gave way and fled?'⁸

Although the dynastic principle of succession reasserted itself during the fourth century in the form of the Constantinian, then the Valentinianic, and finally the Theodosian dynasties, the legacy of the third-century soldier emperors also continued to exert an important influence in various ways. First, it was taken for granted until 395 that emperors personally led imperial forces on active campaigning (the only exception in this period was the teenage Valentinian II). Second, when non-dynastic candidates were required in 364 and 379, the chief qualification of those appointed to the imperial office (Valentinian I and Theodosius I) was military competence.⁹ Third, the army continued to take, or be given, a prominent role in the formal accession of new emperors. This was to be expected in the cases of Constantine in 306 and Julian in 360, who were effectively challenging for the throne and could hardly do so without military support,¹⁰ as also, rather differently, in the somewhat obscure and bloody circumstances surrounding the accession of Constantine's sons in 337 when 'the will of the soldiers' was used to justify the murder of other relatives with potential claims (Zos. 2.40.3; cf. Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 4.68.2). A number of other fourth-century emperors – Jovian in 363, Gratian in 367 and Valentinian II in 375 – acceded to the throne in a military camp during campaigning, so it is hardly surprising to find them being formally acclaimed by the troops (Amm. Marc. 25.5, 27.6, 30.10). Theodosius I was proclaimed emperor in 379 at the frontier city of Sirmium after a period of campaigning, one source emphasizing that he was 'chosen ruler . . . by the vote of all the soldiers',¹¹ while the remaining two instances – those of Valentinian I and Valens in 364 – did not occur during campaigning or in military camps, yet still involved their acclamation by the army as a central feature (Amm. Marc. 26.2, 4). Last, fourth-century emperors made a point of emphasizing their special concern for the interests of their troops, as seen in Licinius' grant of tax privileges to his soldiers and veterans in 311, preserved in the so-called Brigetio tablet, where it is not just the privileges themselves which are important, but also the language with which they are justified and the

⁸ *Pan. Lat.* 10 (2).5.3, trans. Nixon and Rodgers (1996). For discussion of the depiction of emperors as military leaders in the *Latin Panegyrics* more generally, see Mause (1994), 183–204.

⁹ Matthews (1975) 34–5, 88–100; the selection of Jovian after Julian's death on campaign in Persia in 363 was of course affected by unusual circumstances, geographical and religious: for discussion, see Heather (1999a) 105–8.

¹⁰ Eutr. 10.2; *Anon. Val.* 3.6; Zos. 2.9.3; Amm. Marc. 20.4.

¹¹ *Pan. Lat.* 2 (12).32.2 with Nixon and Rodgers (1996) 461 n. 40, who comment that the context is likely to have been 'an assembly [of troops] in full battle array ready to meet any inroad of the enemy'.

practical steps taken to disseminate knowledge of them among the rank and file of the army:

Since in all matters we desire that provision shall always be made for the advantage and profit of our soldiers on account of their loyalty and labours, in this matter also . . . we believe that we must exercise our forethought in making arrangements to provide for our said soldiers. Wherefore, in consideration of our said soldiers' labours, which they undergo through continual expeditions for the State's maintenance and benefit, we believe that we must make arrangements with foresight, not only that during their period of military service they may delight in the enjoyment of the rewards that we have provided suitable to their labours, but also that after military service they may obtain a quiet repose and suitable freedom from care [details of the tax privileges then follow] . . . The said soldiers shall receive the rewards that they deserve from us, rewards earned through their military service, and that they may enjoy forever the eternal benefits of our said indulgence and that the eternal provision of our ordinance may steadfastly endure, it is our will that the text of this our indulgence shall be inscribed on tablets of bronze and shall be dedicated among the [military] standards in each camp . . .¹²

The year 395, when Theodosius I died, marks a watershed in relation to the themes of the previous paragraph. Thereafter, it became the exception, rather than the rule, for emperors to campaign in person. This pattern is especially clear in the eastern half of the empire where, with some minor exceptions, no emperor led the army in person until the early seventh century (Zeno expressed his intention to lead an army into Thrace in 478, though in the event he did not do so (Malchus fr. 18.3); Maurice led two brief forays into Thrace in 584 and 591).¹³ This was also the pattern in the west from 395 until 455; thereafter, some emperors – Avitus, Majorian, Anthemius, Nepos – did campaign in person but this was almost essential in the chaotic circumstances of the time; their reigns were invariably short-lived and within little more than two decades the western half of the empire had ceased to exist. In the east this development did not go unchallenged. In the late fourth century, during the reign of Arcadius (395–408), the philosopher Synesius strongly asserted the importance of the emperor's military role in his pamphlet *On Rulership*.¹⁴ The overall trend, however, is clear.

How is this significant change in campaigning habits to be accounted for? In the immediate circumstances of 395, it began for the simple reason

¹² *FIRA*² 1.93 (trans. Johnson et al. (1961)) with discussion in Corcoran (1996) 145–8. The Brigetio tablet is itself presumably one of the 'tablets of bronze' referred to in the final sentence.

¹³ For Malchus, see Blockley (1983); on Maurice, see Theophyl. Sim. 1.7.2, 5.16–6.3, with Whitby and Whitby (1986) 155 n. 86–7; Kaegi (1981) 20 claims, on the basis of Theodore Lector, 60, that Marcian campaigned in Thrace in September 451, but the text makes no reference to his leading out an army or waging war; cf. Dagron (1974) 86.

¹⁴ Cameron and Long (1993) 104–5, 137–8; Whitby (2004) 179–86, (2005) 368–77.

that on their accession neither of Theodosius' sons was old enough to have any military experience – Arcadius was eighteen, Honorius was eleven. Even once they were older, neither son seems to have had any desire to become militarily active, and there were a number of able and ambitious generals during their reigns who were more than happy to relieve them of the responsibility (Stilicho and Constantius in the west, Gainas in the east). In 408 Arcadius died and was succeeded by his seven-year-old son Theodosius II, and since Theodosius reigned for more than four decades and likewise had no military inclinations, the pattern was perpetuated in the east. Similarly in the west Honorius died in 423 and after a period of turmoil was eventually succeeded in 425 by the six-year-old Valentinian III, who reigned for three decades without ever trying to engage in campaigning himself, even once an adult.

Yet it seems unlikely that the initial youth and inexperience of emperors in the first half of the fifth century is the full explanation. After all, Arcadius, Honorius, Theodosius II and Valentinian III were adults for part of their reigns, and nearly all subsequent emperors were adults at their accession, with many of them, moreover, having gained military experience prior to their attaining the imperial throne. One sixth-century source claimed that Theodosius I had explicitly ruled that his sons were not to engage in campaigning (John Lydus, *Mag.* 2.11, 3.41), but this seems more likely to reflect a desire on the part of emperors and/or courtiers to offer an apologia and counter the sorts of criticisms Synesius had voiced. More plausibly, it has been suggested¹⁵ that the shift to non-campaigning emperors may in part have been the result of the experience of Julian and Valens in the second half of the fourth century; the deaths of both emperors in the course of campaigning – Julian in Persia in 363, Valens at Adrianople in 378 – may well have persuaded prominent officials that the risks entailed by the personal involvement of emperors in warfare outweighed any benefits and that it was better to encourage emperors to leave the dangers of the battlefield to the generals.¹⁶

Whatever the explanation for this change, however, it raised even more acutely the twin issues of maintaining imperial legitimacy through the ideology of victory and of the emperor's relationship with the army. How were emperors in the fifth and sixth centuries to project a convincing image of military success and to retain the support (or at least acquiescence) of the army when they did not themselves campaign in person? To take the latter issue first, part of the answer lay in the continuities embodied in the rituals of accession ceremonial, even if with the passage of time

¹⁵ Kaegi (1981) 21–3; McCormick (1986) 47; Whitby (1992a) 302–3.

¹⁶ Cf. the teenage Valentinian II's apparent attempt to lead a campaign in his own right in the early 390s, thwarted by the general Arbogast (O'Flynn (1983) 9).

these rituals gradually metamorphosed away from a military emphasis.¹⁷ The endorsement of Valens' accession by the troops in 364 had taken place at the Hebdomon, the military parade ground on the outskirts of Constantinople, a precedent exploited at the proclamation of a succession of (non-campaigning) emperors until the mid-fifth century – Arcadius, Honorius, Theodosius II, Marcian and Leo I.¹⁸ In the second half of the fifth century the location for accession ceremonies shifted to the hippodrome, and then in the second half of the sixth century to the imperial palace, but an element of military involvement was still signified through the presence of the palace guards, and also through the continued role of rituals with military connotations – crowning with a torque, being raised on a shield, and the distribution of an accession 'donative' or bonus to the troops present. The first two elements, both symbolic and first used in the context of Julian's elevation in 360, can be traced through to the accession of Justin II in 565,¹⁹ while the third, material, element was of long-standing usage and recurs regularly, apparently at a standardized amount.²⁰ Donatives were also issued on other occasions, notably the five-yearly anniversaries of accession, and formed an important supplement to soldiers' income.²¹ Their wider significance is illustrated by the following episode from the reign of Anastasius:

And on 29th the emperor assembled all the commanders of the forces and all the officers of the scholarians [the imperial guard] and the patricians, and he said to them, 'According to my regular custom I wish to give a donative'. For so it had been his practice to give it once every five years ever since he became emperor, at the same time requiring oaths from all the Romans to the effect that they would not act treacherously against the empire. But on this occasion he required them to take the oath in the following manner: a copy of the gospel being placed for them, they went in and received the five denarii [i.e., solidi] each, and they swore as follows: 'By this law of God and by the words which are written in it, we will contend with all our might for the true faith and for the empire, and we will not act treacherously either against the truth or the emperor'. In this manner, indeed, he required them to take the oath, because he heard that Macedonius [patriarch of Constantinople] was trying to raise a rebellion against him. On 30th July the emperor gave a largesse to the whole army.

(*Zach. Hist. eccl.* 7.8, trans. Hamilton and Brooks (1899))

¹⁷ For more general discussions of late Roman accession ceremonies, see MacCormack (1981) pt III; Olster (1993) 159–63; also Whitby (2004) 182–3.

¹⁸ *Chron. Pasch.* 556, 562–3, 568, 590; *Chron. min.* 1.298; Const. Porph. 1.91 (p. 410 Reiske); on the Hebdomon and adjacent area of the Kampos, see Janin (1964) 408–12.

¹⁹ Corippus, *In laud. Iust.* 2.130–9 with Cameron (1976) 159–61 for development.

²⁰ Jones (1964) 624; Bastien (1988) 24, with Campbell (1984) 165–85 for practice during the early Empire.

²¹ See Bastien (1988), 17–27, 53–117 for a tabulation of occasions as reflected in the literary sources and in the numismatic evidence from the late third to the late fifth century; Justinian is alleged to have abolished donatives (Procop. *Build.* 24.27–9), but 'as regards the field armies, at least, this seems unlikely' (Hendy (1985) 178), and, even if so, it was resumed by Tiberius II (Joh. Eph. *Hist. eccl.* 3.11).

The importance of material incentives is further highlighted, negatively, by instances of unrest and mutiny on the part of some troops during the sixth century precipitated by delays in receipt of their pay.²²

Accession ceremonies and anniversaries will have provided comparatively rare opportunities for non-campaigning emperors to address at least some of the empire's troops in person,²³ which increased the importance of other symbolic strategies for retaining the loyalty of the troops, all with precedents during the early Empire.²⁴ The moral and religious force of the military oath which soldiers swore at the time of their enlistment ought not to be underestimated.²⁵ The Christianized form it had assumed by the late fourth century is recorded in a military treatise:

They swear by God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and by the Majesty of the Emperor which second to God is to be loved and worshipped by the human race. For since the Emperor has received the name of the 'August' [i.e. Augustus], faithful devotion should be given, unceasing homage paid him as if to a present and corporeal deity. For it is God whom a private citizen or a soldier serves, when he faithfully loves him who reigns by God's authority. The soldiers swear that they will strenuously do all that the Emperor may command, will never desert the service, nor refuse to die for the Roman State.²⁶

It is noteworthy that obedience to all the commands of the emperor receives priority. There is only limited explicit evidence for the military oath after the fourth century when the advent of non-campaigning emperors increased its importance – it is alluded to in a number of laws from the first half of the fifth century²⁷ – but it would be very surprising if it lapsed, particularly given the importance Anastasius attached to more general oaths of loyalty in the episode in the preceding paragraph; soldiers are certainly presented as wishing to swear oaths of loyalty to Justinian before confronting rebel soldiers in north Africa in 537 and an oath of loyalty to the emperor was regarded as standard procedure when a commander enrolled a bodyguard in the same period (Procop. *Wars* 4.16.25, 18.6).

Another long-standing strategy was the language of identification which emperors used with reference to their troops. During the second century this had been particularly evident in emperors' talk of troops as their 'fellow

²² Kaegi (1981) chs. 3–4; see further pp. 400–1 below.

²³ The only other potential instance of which I am aware is Justinian seeing off the Vandal expedition from the seaward side of the imperial palace in 533 (Procop. *Wars* 3.12.1–2).

²⁴ Campbell (1984) ch. 2. ²⁵ Lee (1996) 207.

²⁶ Veg. *Mil.* 2.5 (trans. Milner (1993)) with discussion of the date in Milner (1993), xxv–xxix.

²⁷ *Cod. Theod.* 7.8.15 (430/3) (*militare sacramentum*); *Nov. Theod.* 4.1.2 (438) (*sacramenta*); *Nov. Val.* 15.1 (444/5) (*qui novis sacramentis obligantur*). Maurice, *Strat.* does not, unfortunately, discuss the induction of new recruits, the only item of potential relevance being the ambiguous recommendation that 'the general should make sure of the good disposition of his troops by an oath' (8.2.70); Maspero (1912) 52–8 discusses sixth-century papyri bearing on the induction of new recruits into the army, but does not refer to any evidence for oath-taking as part of this process, nor, more generally, does Grosse (1920).

soldiers', a practice which can be paralleled during the fourth century.²⁸ After 395 it became less plausible for non-campaigning emperors to talk in precisely those terms, although Honorius did so on one occasion,²⁹ as also did Leo I at his accession – the latter with greater justification since he was, after all, an army officer immediately prior to becoming emperor (*Const. Porph.* 1.91 (p. 412)). However, this did not prevent non-military emperors from employing other analogous phraseology suggestive of familiarity with and/or deference towards their troops – 'our army', 'our soldiers', 'our gallant soldiers', 'our very gallant army', 'our loyal soldiers', 'the most noble soldiers', 'our victorious eagles', 'our standards'.³⁰

A related way of trying to reinforce mutual identification was through the use of unit names which incorporated the emperor's name. Even a brief skim through the *Notitia Dignitatum* reveals many regiments whose names reflect the holders of imperial office during the fourth century – for example, *legio III Diocletiana Thebaeorum*, *legio I Flavia Constantia, placidi Valentinianici felices, equites Theodosiani*. In the absence of a comparable document for the fifth and sixth centuries and the reluctance of narrative historians to include unit names on stylistic grounds, it is more difficult to establish continuity of practice in this respect during the period of non-military emperors, but there is some suggestive evidence, mostly derived from inscriptions and papyri, indicating units with the following names: *Leones clibanarii*, *Numidae Justiniani*, *equites Perso-Justiniani*, *primi felices Justiniani*, *Scythae Justiniani*, *Justiniani Vandali*, *Libyes Justiniani*, *Paraetonitae Justiniani* and *Tiberiani*.³¹

The other, related, issue of sustaining the ideology of victory is also relevant to the emperor's relationship with the army, but of course bears more widely on the legitimation of the emperor's political position in the Empire as well. In discussing this aspect, it is important to make clear at the outset that in the late antique world victory over a usurper seems to have been regarded as comparable in importance to victory over a foreign invader.

As devastating as the barbarian incursions may have been to the particular regions they afflicted, it is easy to forget that they remained a localized phenomenon . . . An imperial rival, on the other hand, was a more dangerous foe and a deeper threat to a nascent dynasty . . .³²

²⁸ Lee (1998) 224–5. ²⁹ Sivan (1985) 274 (*sanctissimi nostri commilitones*).

³⁰ *Nov. Theod.* 6.1 (438); Justinian, *Nov.* 130.1, 6, 7 (545); *Cod. Theod.* 7.1.18 (400); *Nov. Theod.* 4.1.2 (438); Justinian, *Nov.* 130.8, 9 (545); *Cod. Theod.* 7.6.4 (396), 7.6.5 (423); *Nov. Maj.* 1.1 (458); *Cod. Just.* 12.50.22 (Leo); *Cod. Theod.* 7.5.2 (404), 7.8.13 (422); *SEG* IX.356 (501); *Cod. Theod.* 7.18.9 (396).

³¹ Jones (1964) 655; Maspero (1912) 3, 50–1; Hoffmann (1961–2); Whitby (1988) 259; note also the eighth-century evidence for a *bandus secundus Tiberiacus* posted at Ravenna (Brown (1984) 281 s.v. *Vitalis* 4) which presumably was originally formed or renamed by Tiberius II.

³² McCormick (1986) 82–3. Constantius II's negative reputation for achieving greater success in civil than in foreign wars (Eutr. 10.15.2; Amm. Marc. 16.10.2, 21.16.15) might give pause for thought, but those contemporaries who emphasized this point were hardly impartial observers.

The most obvious way in which military success was exploited to bolster the emperor's position was through victory celebrations. The historical record concerning such occasions from the late third to the late sixth century is necessarily incomplete, but the available evidence shows a gradual movement away from the traditions of the Republic and early Empire: triumphal entries gave way to celebrations which focused on the hippodrome, and the impact of Christianity made itself felt with the passage of time.³³ It has also been suggested that the regularity of such occasions increased at times when the Empire's military position was particularly weak – 'there appears to be a correlation between severe and widely perceived blows to imperial prestige and intensification in the rhythm of imperial victory celebrations'.³⁴ Hand in hand with this went the continued use of victory titles, in the form both of epithets such as *triumphator* and *victor*, and of commemorations of success against specific peoples, especially Alamannicus, Francicus, Germanicus and Gothicus.³⁵

A panoply of other media was also available to emperors to reinforce an aura of military success. It may well merely be an accident of source survival, but interestingly, much of the evidence for this in the fifth and sixth centuries pertains to emperors who lacked military experience even before their accession – that is, those who had the greatest need to enhance the military dimension of their image. Literary expressions in the form of panegyric were one important medium. Arcadius' reign saw the production of an epic poem commemorating the victory over the usurper Gainas in 400 (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 6.6), while Roman successes against Persia in the early 420s were publicized in various panegyrics, including a poem by Theodosius' own wife (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.21.7–10); the context of an anonymous hexameter encomium which survives only in fragmentary form may well be Zeno's suppression of the revolt of Illus;³⁶ Anastasius' victory over the Isaurians in the 490s was celebrated in a six-book epic by Christodorus, and another poet of this period, Colluthus, obliged in a similar way after the conclusion of his war against the Persians in the following decade;³⁷ likewise, the panegyrics of Anastasius by Procopius of Gaza and Priscian made much of his military successes against the Isaurians,³⁸ with the latter also claiming for him descent from that great general of Republican days, Pompey the Great – a well-established strategy;³⁹ when Justinian commissioned John Lydus to write an account of his successful war against

³³ McCormick (1986) chs. 2–3 for detailed discussion. ³⁴ McCormick (1986) 59.

³⁵ Röscher (1978). ³⁶ McCail (1978). ³⁷ *Suda*, s.v. Christodorus, Colluthus.

³⁸ Procopius *Gaz.* 9–10; Priscian 16–139, with discussion by Chauvot (1986).

³⁹ Priscian *toff.*; cf. claims in panegyric for Constantine's descent from the militarily successful third-century emperor Claudius Gothicus; (*Pan. Lat.* 6 (7).2, with discussion by Nixon and Rodgers (1996) 219 n. 6) and for Theodosius I's descent from Trajan (*Them. Or.* 16.205, 19.229; Claud. *Cons. Hon.* 14, 17ff., with discussion by Syme (1971) 101–3).

the Persians (*Mag.* 3.28), presumably following the victory at Dara in 530, the expectation on the part of both men must have been that it would be laudatory in tone. When Justin II ascended the throne in 565, he could not claim any military successes, either directly or indirectly, a potential problem which his panegyrist cleverly solved through his description of the formal apparel which Justin donned for his accession:

He put on his royal limbs the red thongs . . . with which the victorious Roman emperor tramples conquered kings and tames barbarian necks. Only emperors, under whose feet is the blood of kings, can adopt this attire . . . The chlamys, which was adorned with tawny gold and outdid the sun as the emperor stretched out his right hand, covered the imperial shoulders in glowing purple. A golden brooch fastened the joins with its curving bite, and from the ends of chains hung jewels which the fortunate victory in the Gothic war produced and which Ravenna, loyal to our rulers, brought back, and which Belisarius carried from the Vandal court. The indications of your triumphs, pious Justinian, will remain while Justin is safe and rules the world.⁴⁰

Visual depictions and commemorations of imperial victory were another important medium, especially since some of these would have been accessible to a much wider audience who lacked entrée to the imperial court where celebratory panegyrics were presented, let alone the education to appreciate them.⁴¹ It is telling that when the late fourth-century preacher John Chrysostom wanted to draw a spiritual analogy from the process of painting, he took for granted that his congregation were familiar with such imperial imagery and that typical content would be the following:

Let us consider the images that painters delineate. You have often seen an imperial image covered with blue colour [the background wash]. Then the painter traces white lines and makes an emperor, an imperial throne, horses standing by, a bodyguard, and fettered enemies lying underneath.

Elsewhere he comments, 'Have you not observed this on imperial images, namely that the image itself representing the emperor is placed at the top, while underneath, at the foot, are inscribed the emperor's trophies, victories and achievements?'⁴²

Actual examples of such paintings have, understandably, not survived, and it is a similar story with other types of victory monument, knowledge

⁴⁰ Corippus, *In laud. Iust.* 2.105–27 (trans. Cameron) with commentary by Cameron (1976) 158–9. At 3.308–401, Corippus goes on to present Justin as achieving a 'diplomatic victory' over arrogant Avar envoys (cf. Men. Prot. fr. 8).

⁴¹ Cf. the observation on Corippus' panegyric that it was a poem 'intended for a court audience which would be able to understand the intricacies of the important ceremonies and the political nuances of Justin's accession' (Cameron (1976) 4).

⁴² *In dictum Pauli* (PG 51.247, trans. Mango (1972)); *In inscript. altaris* 2 (PG 51.71, trans. Mango (1972)). For portable icons of emperors, cf. MacCoull (1988) 72–5; Theophyl. Sim. 3.8.2.

of which derives from written descriptions or other evidence. A triumphal arch was erected in Rome during Honorius' reign to commemorate success against the Goths in 402; the arch itself is no longer extant, but is known from an inscription which indicates that it was decorated with statues of the then emperors (Honorius, Arcadius and Theodosius II) and with representations of the spoils as 'an enduring memorial of the triumphs' (*ILS* 798). Arcadius erected a victory column in Constantinople, modelled on that of Trajan, to celebrate the suppression of the revolt of Gainas, including a depiction of himself in military dress,⁴³ and Anastasius built a palace in honour of his Isaurian victory (*Anth. Pal.* 9.656). Although not known to be linked to any particular event, Marcian had a statue made of himself on horseback trampling a defeated enemy (*Anth. Pal.* 9.802), while a number of equestrian statues of Justinian, clearly designed to emphasize the emperor's military prowess, adorned Constantinople. The most famous was the one on a column in the square in front of the senate house:

At the summit of the column stands a huge bronze horse turned towards the east, a most noteworthy sight . . . Upon this horse is mounted a bronze image of the emperor like a colossus. And the image is clad like Achilles, for that is how they call the costume he wears. He is shod in ankle boots and has no greaves on his legs. Furthermore, he wears a cuirass in heroic fashion and his head is covered in a helmet which gives the impression of swaying, and a kind of radiance flashes forth from there . . . He gazes towards the rising sun, steering his course, I suppose, against the Persians. In his left hand he holds a globe, by which the sculptor has signified that the whole earth and sea were subject to him, yet he carries neither sword nor any other weapon, but a cross surmounts his globe, by virtue of which alone he has won kingship and victory in war. Stretching forth his right hand towards the regions of the east and spreading out his fingers, he commands the barbarians that dwell there to remain at home and not to advance any further.⁴⁴

A second equestrian statue, in the hippodrome, probably included figures of the defeated enemy lying prostrate before Justinian and commemorated Roman successes against the Persians and Bulgars in 530.⁴⁵ Also during Justinian's reign, the entrance to the imperial palace was decorated with a large mosaic depicting the successes of his armies against the Vandals and Goths:

On either side are war and battle, and numerous cities are being captured, some in Italy, others in Libya. The Emperor is victorious through his lieutenant, the general Belisarius, who returns to the Emperor, his whole army intact, and offers

⁴³ Liebeschuetz (1990) 120–1.

⁴⁴ Procop. *Build.* 1.2 (trans. Mango (1972)) with discussion in Downey (1940), Mango (1993a), Whitby (2000d) 65–6 (the last in particular emphasizing the close association between this statement of Justinian's military prowess and Hagia Sophia, his most spectacular architectural achievement).

⁴⁵ *Anth. Pal.* 16.62 with Croke (1980).

him booty, namely kings and kingdoms and all other things prized by men. In the center stand the Emperor and Empress Theodora, both seeming to rejoice as they celebrate their victory over the kings of the Vandals and the Goths, who approach them as captives of war being led into bondage. They are surrounded by the Roman Senate, one and all in festive mood. This is indicated by the mosaic cubes which on their faces take on a joyful bloom. So they smile proudly as they offer the Emperor divine honors because of the magnitude of his achievements.

(Procop. *Build.* 1.10.15–19 (trans. Mango (1972)))

Although more restricted in terms of audience, mention should be made of both the golden tableware Justinian had made for use at palace banquets, with engravings of the triumph over the Vandals, his richly decorated funeral vestment which showed him symbolically trampling on the neck of the Vandal king, and the golden throne which his successor Justin II ascended, adorned with winged Victories;⁴⁶ similarly, the famous Barberini ivory, which may or may not be Justinianic, certainly depicts an emperor of the late fifth or early sixth century in triumphal mode (fig. 11.1), while another item of ivory from the early fifth century portrays the emperor Honorius in military garb (fig. 11.2).

The most effective medium for conveying visual images, however, was coinage, because this had by far the best chance of reaching the largest number of people on a regular basis, particularly the army; indeed, the donatives to the troops referred to earlier were major occasions for the minting of coinage.⁴⁷ The motifs on coins assumed increased importance with the advent of non-campaigning emperors at the end of the fourth century, but were obviously also significant before then in terms of advertising imperial achievements and aspirations, and military success was a consistent theme. The silver coinage of the tetrarchs bore images which were 'almost wholly military', linked to legends which focused on three main themes – victory over the Sarmatians, the valour of the soldiers and the foresight of the emperors.⁴⁸ During Constantine's reign,

the warlike aspects of the emperor's position are strongly underlined by the wearing of the helmet [on imperial busts on the obverse of coins], with or without additional adjuncts such as spear and shield. Characteristically they dominate the two bronze coinages alluding to the Imperial Victory (and the same or related types in gold) or to the Valour of the Army.⁴⁹

Images of Victory on a globe were also prominent on the obverses of Constantinian coinage,⁵⁰ while representations of Victory and of the army, accompanied by appropriate legends, appeared periodically on reverses.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Corippus, *In laud. Iust.* 3.120–5, 1.272–93, 3.190–204 with commentary by Cameron (1976) 184–5, 140–2, 187–9.

⁴⁷ Kent (1994) 3. ⁴⁸ Sutherland (1967) 110. ⁴⁹ Bruun (1966) 36.

⁵⁰ Bruun (1966) 40–1. ⁵¹ Bruun (1966) 46–56.



Figure 11.1 The Barberini ivory, depicting a late Roman emperor, perhaps Justinian, as a victorious cavalryman.

The coinage of Constantine's sons included images of Victory and reference to the courage or glory of the army, while the principal *solidus* type of Julian's reign depicted a soldier holding a trophy over his left shoulder and his right hand on the head of a captive, with the legend 'the valour of the army'.⁵² The most common motifs on the coinage of the Valentinianic

⁵² Kent (1981) 32–47.



Figure 11.2 Ivory diptych of Anicius Petronius Probus, depicting the emperor Honorius in military dress.

dynasty included the emperor holding Victory on a globe and a standard, Victory writing *vota* on a shield, the emperor dragging a captive and the emperor standing on a vessel steered by Victory, with legends such as ‘the valour of the emperors’, ‘the valour of the army’ and ‘the victory of the emperors’.⁵³

During the fifth century a very common image on the obverse of coins was the emperor in military costume, wearing cuirass and chlamys, while in the eastern half of the empire the emperor’s bust is typically cuirassed but not cloaked, and bears a crested, diademed helmet. In the right hand and

⁵³ Pearce (1951) xl.



Figure 11.3a *Solidus* of Arcadius, in military dress, c. AD 400.



Figure 11.3b *Solidus* of Honorius in military dress, c. AD 400.

carried over the shoulder behind the head is a spear, and in front of the left shoulder a shield which usually carries the motif of a horseman riding to the right over an enemy and striking with a spear⁵⁴ (figs. 11.3a and 11.3b). This type continues in use on the *solidus* (and sometimes other issues) throughout the reigns of Anastasius, Justin I, Justinian, Justin II, Tiberius II and Maurice (though in this last case, many mints ceased to include the shield after early years).⁵⁵ As for the reverses of fifth-century coins,

Victory is the abiding theme of the coinage. It may be represented by Victory herself, by the victorious emperor, or by a Christian emblem, usually within the victor's wreath of laurels . . . Victory herself may be standing, sometimes with a captive at her feet . . . Seated Victory usually inscribes, or points to, imperial vota on a shield or in a wreath, or more rarely a Chi-Rho. An important and seminal type of the early 420s, brought into general use in the East at the start of Marcian's reign, showed Victory supporting a long jewelled cross . . . The figure of the emperor appears in many contexts, usually as an armed man . . . Imperial attributes may be a standard, a long cross, a spear, a shield or a globe, the latter with or without a Victory or Cross upon it . . . Occasionally the emperor kicks, suppresses or stands over a captive [fig. 11.3b], or extends his right hand to a suppliant figure . . .⁵⁶

Depictions of Victory remain a feature of reverses during the reigns of all sixth-century emperors, with the exception of Tiberius II, and likewise the emperor in military garb is standard for the reigns of Justin I, Justinian and Justin II.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Kent (1994) 46–7.

⁵⁵ Bellinger (1966).

⁵⁶ Kent (1994) 54–5.

⁵⁷ Bellinger (1966).

II. MILITARY CHALLENGES TO IMPERIAL POWER

The strategies for retaining the loyalty of the army discussed in the previous section could go some way towards securing imperial power against threats from that direction, but they could never guarantee the troops' loyalty, and during the course of late antiquity challenges to imperial power did periodically emerge from within the Empire's own armed forces. Some of these were the result of ambitious individuals exploiting the interests of troops for their own ends, others were the result of widespread dissatisfaction on the part of the rank and file. Broadly speaking these two problems were associated with successive periods – the former with the fourth and fifth centuries, the latter with the sixth – and so will be discussed in that sequence. An important sub-category under the first heading is that of generals who sought to exercise a controlling influence in state affairs without overthrowing the reigning emperor – a phenomenon of the late fourth and fifth centuries.

One of the themes that emerges from a study of army-based usurpations during the fourth and fifth centuries is the willingness of troops to support an individual who could claim blood ties with a recent ruler. Constantine capitalized on the loyalty of troops in Britain to his father, the emperor Constantius I, in 306; Nepotianus, one of those who tried to seize power in 350, could claim blood ties to Constantine (Zos. 2.43.2);⁵⁸ Procopius, who led a revolt against Valens in 365, played on his relationship with Julian (Amm. Marc. 26.6.18, 7.16); and both Basiliscus and Marcian, who revolted against Zeno in the 470s, had ties to the recently deceased emperor Leo; indeed, Marcian even claimed that he had a better right to the throne than Zeno because Zeno's wife Ariadne had been born before Leo became emperor, whereas Marcian's own wife, Leo's younger daughter Leontia, had been born 'in the purple' – that is, while Leo was emperor.⁵⁹ Legitimacy along these lines was clearly something that counted with elements in the army. Equally, disgruntlement with a current emperor could play a part in alienating troops and making them receptive to overtures from a commander. Constantine's son Constans is reported to have become (for reasons unknown) 'unpopular with the soldiers' (Eutr. 10.9), which facilitated Magnentius' plans for a coup in 350; some of Julian's troops in Gaul were apparently not at all happy with Constantius II's plans to transfer them to the east for his Persian campaign in 360 (Amm. Marc. 20.4), in addition to which Julian was himself a member of the imperial family; and some of Gratian's troops had become disaffected through his

⁵⁸ Cf. also Vetrano in 350 who, according to one version, was endorsed in his claim to imperial power by Constantius' sister, Constantia (*Chron. Pasch.* p. 539).

⁵⁹ *PLRE* 11, s.v. Fl. Marcian 17.

evident favouritism towards a body of Alan recruits (Zos. 4.53.2–3), on which Magnus Maximus was able to capitalize in 383.

Other attempts by military commanders to unseat a reigning emperor involved more specific circumstances. The attempt of Illus to overthrow Zeno in the mid-480s was essentially a case of factional infighting between fellow Isaurians who were both in a position to call upon the support of retainers from the region, while Vitalian's campaigns against Anastasius during the middle of the second decade of the sixth century appear to have been motivated on his part by genuine religious disagreements prompted by the fall-out from the council of Chalcedon and Anastasius' apparent sympathy for Monophysite views.⁶⁰

A related phenomenon during the late fourth and fifth centuries was the emergence of powerful and ambitious generals who did not seek to overthrow the reigning emperor, but who sought to exercise a controlling influence in political affairs. In the west this trend began with Arbogast, who dominated the court of Valentinian II in the early 390s and then, after the latter's death, established Eugenius as his effective puppet on the imperial throne (392–4). Stilicho was the arbiter of power during the first half of Honorius' reign (395–408), while Aëtius exercised comparable influence throughout much of the reign of Valentinian III (425–55). After Aëtius' elimination Ricimer became 'king-maker' for most of the remaining two decades of the existence of the western half of the empire, establishing and removing a succession of emperors.⁶¹ In the east a comparable figure can be identified in the person of Aspar, who probably had some influence over the succession of Marcian to Theodosius II in 450,⁶² and certainly determined the succession of Leo to Marcian in 457 (Candidus fr. 1). While the correlation between the emergence of these 'generalissimos' and the advent of (initially) under-age and non-campaigning emperors is presumably no accident, this intriguing phenomenon nevertheless raises a number of questions.

Perhaps the most obvious question is why these individuals did not seize the throne for themselves. In most cases there was at least one obvious obstacle – with the exception of Aëtius, all were of foreign origin. Arbogast was a Frank, Stilicho's father was a Vandal, Ricimer was the son of a Suevic father and Visigothic mother and Aspar was an Alan – a consequence of the wider late Roman phenomenon of significant numbers of troops

⁶⁰ Failure of supplies to arrive in 513 had also contributed to the troops' dissatisfaction and willingness to back Vitalian: John of Antioch fr. 214e (*FHG* v.32).

⁶¹ For a convenient account of all these western figures, see O'Flynn (1983).

⁶² Note, however, the fascinating suggestion of Zuckerman (1994b) 172–6 that another powerful general during the final years of Theodosius' reign, Flavius Zeno (not the later emperor), may also have played a key role in this.

being recruited from non-Roman peoples.⁶³ Religious affiliation presented an additional problem for some of them: Arbogast was a pagan, Aspar and Ricimer were heterodox Arian Christians;⁶⁴ indeed, according to one ancient source, it was Aspar's Arian commitment which was the prime obstacle to his becoming emperor.⁶⁵ Aëtius' evident reluctance to replace Valentinian III with himself was indicative of the strength of feeling that blood ties to the imperial family were a crucial ingredient in legitimacy. This would also explain why he tried to arrange the marriage of his son to one of Valentinian's daughters.⁶⁶ Stilicho established marital ties with the family of Honorius (he was married to the latter's cousin, while his own daughters were successively married to the emperor), and Aspar organized the marriage of his son Patricius to one of Leo's daughters, no doubt hoping, like Aëtius, to legitimate his family's claim to the imperial throne.⁶⁷

Another question is why there should have been a preponderance of these generalissimos in the west. Part of the answer seems to have been the presence in the east during the first half of the fifth century of a number of assertive and capable civilian officials. Their effectiveness was particularly illustrated during the crisis of 400 when the Gothic general Gainas tried unsuccessfully to seize power in Constantinople.⁶⁸ Another part of the answer is that Stilicho created a highly centralized army structure in the west which concentrated military power in the hands of one individual, whereas in the east control of the armed forces remained more dispersed among five field armies – two stationed near Constantinople, and one each in Illyricum, Thrace and on the eastern frontier.⁶⁹ Not only did this latter arrangement reduce the chances of any one individual having too much military power at his disposal, it also diverted the energies of generals into rivalry with one another. Leo's elimination of Aspar also showed greater foresight than Valentinian did in comparable circumstances *vis-à-vis* Aëtius. Both emperors eventually murdered their respective generals – Valentinian did so personally in 454, while Leo arranged for Aspar's assassination (along with one of his adult sons) during a banquet in 471. Leo may thereby have acquired the unsavoury epithet of 'the butcher' (Candidus fr. 2), but he had also taken the precaution of establishing over a period of several years prior to this a counterbalance to Aspar in the form of another general, the Isaurian Zeno, as well as organizing additional security measures in the

⁶³ See further below and ch. 8 in this volume.

⁶⁴ According to *PLRE*, Stilicho was a Christian; it offers no comment on the religious affiliation of Aëtius, but the fact that his son Gaudentius was baptised (*PLRE* II, s.v. Gaudentius 7) implies that he too was probably a Christian.

⁶⁵ Procop. *Wars* 3.6.3; cf. n. 67 below. ⁶⁶ Prosper Tiro s.a. 454, O'Flynn (1983) 95.

⁶⁷ *PLRE* II, s.v. Iulius Patricius 15. Even then, Patricius' Arianism was regarded by the populace of Constantinople as an obstacle to his becoming emperor: see Greatrex (2001) 76 for references.

⁶⁸ Liebeschuetz (1990) pt II (esp. ch. 12), Cameron and Long (1993) ch. 8.

⁶⁹ Jones (1964) 609–10.

form of a new palace guard known as the *excubitores*, and these steps proved sufficient for him to weather the inevitable backlash by Aspar's supporters; Valentinian had taken no such precautions and within six months was duly slain by disgruntled retainers of Aëtius.

The sixth century witnessed a significant change in the pattern of military challenges to imperial power. Apart from Vitalian's unsuccessful revolt against Anastasius, there were no attempts by commanders to seize or exercise a controlling influence over imperial power.⁷⁰ Military challenges instead assumed the form of disgruntled rank and file soldiers expressing their dissatisfaction with their conditions of service. Why were generals no longer such a threat? A major part of the answer must surely be that sixth-century emperors took care to appoint to military commands a significant number of individuals who were either related to them or were otherwise trusted associates.⁷¹ Anastasius' nephews Hypatius and Pompeius both held military commands during his reign;⁷² Germanus, nephew of Justin I, and his son Justin (not the later Justin II), were generals under Justinian, as was Sittas, husband of the empress Theodora's sister;⁷³ two of Justin II's generals, Marcian and Justinian, were also relatives of the emperor,⁷⁴ as were the commanders Peter (brother) and Philippicus (brother-in-law) of the emperor Maurice.⁷⁵ Justinian's major reorganization of the eastern military command in 528, reducing the remit of the master of the soldiers in the east (*magister militum per Orientem*) by creating a separate Armenian command in the north with equal status,⁷⁶ may also be significant in this respect; while no doubt serving an eminently practical purpose,⁷⁷ it may also have been a decision taken with an eye to its political advantages – to curtail the potential power available to holders of this geographically extensive command and perhaps to encourage some distractive rivalry with his Armenian counterpart.

The sixth-century general in the best position to have challenged for the throne was Belisarius, and it is worth giving some consideration as to why he did not do so. That Justinian came to regard him as a threat is clear. Although Belisarius did not enjoy uninterrupted success on the battlefield throughout his career, his remarkably speedy capture of Carthage and destruction of Vandal rule in north Africa in 533–4 with comparatively

⁷⁰ This is not to say that there are not indications of dissatisfaction with the emperor on the part of some generals at times during the sixth century, but nothing serious came of them: see Procop. *Build.* 4.2; *Wars* 7.31–2; Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 5.30.

⁷¹ Cf. Jones (1964) 1153 n. 38; Kaegi (1981) 60–1; Whitby (2000a) 473–4. The adverse experiences of Leo and Zeno with various relatives and in-laws in positions of military command during the fifth century show that this was not, however, always the perfect solution.

⁷² *PLRE* II, s.v. Fl. Hypatius 6, Pompeius 2.

⁷³ *PLRE* II, s.v. Germanus 4; *PLRE* III, s.v. Iustinus 4, Sittas.

⁷⁴ *PLRE* II, s.v. Marcianus 7, Iustinianus 3.

⁷⁵ *PLRE* III, s.v. Petrus 55, Philippicus 3.

⁷⁶ Jones (1964) 271, 655. ⁷⁷ Cf. Greatrex (1998) 153–4.

small forces, against expectations informed by painful memories of the emperor Leo's disastrous Vandal expedition in 468, ensured his reputation as a general and earned him enormous and enduring kudos in Constantinople. Justinian was already greatly indebted to Belisarius since the latter had played an important role in January 532 in suppressing the so-called Nika riot in Constantinople which had threatened an early end to Justinian's reign, but he was also alive to the danger to his own position posed by Belisarius' African success. In the immediate circumstances a careful balancing act was required. Belisarius was awarded the consulship for 535⁷⁸ and was allowed a triumphal procession through the streets of Constantinople, albeit with important modifications of the traditional format designed to ensure that Justinian was not eclipsed: unlike Roman generals of old who were borne along in a chariot, Belisarius proceeded on foot and he joined the vanquished Vandal king Gelimer in prostrating himself before the emperor in the hippodrome.⁷⁹ However, Belisarius' distribution of gold and other Vandal booty to the public on ceremonial occasions during his year as consul (Procop. *Wars* 4.9.15–16, 5.5.18–19) clearly alarmed Justinian, whose subsequent restrictions on the consular distribution of gold have been seen plausibly as a reflection of his worries about Belisarius' popularity.⁸⁰ Also telling is Justinian's reaction when Belisarius returned to Constantinople in 540 with the captured Gothic king Wittigis in tow and the war in Italy apparently also brought to a successful conclusion:

When he received the wealth of Theoderic [the most famous Gothic king], a notable sight in itself, Justinian merely laid it out for the senators to view privately in the palace, since he was jealous of the magnitude and splendour of the achievement. He did not bring it out before the people, nor did he grant Belisarius the customary triumph, as he had done when he returned from his victory over Gelimer and the Vandals. Nevertheless, the name of Belisarius was on everyone's lips . . . The inhabitants of Constantinople took delight in watching Belisarius as he came out of his house each day and proceeded to the city centre or as he returned to his house, and no-one could get enough of this sight. For his progress resembled a crowded festival procession, since he was always escorted by a large number of Vandals, as well as Goths and Moors.

(Procop. *Wars* 7.1.3–6 (Loeb trans. with revisions))

It is of course possible that Procopius deliberately overdrew the extent to which Belisarius experienced apparent ingratitude at the hands of Justinian as part of a polemic against the latter, but even if so, the question must still stand as to why Belisarius did not capitalize on his popularity and

⁷⁸ Cf. Anastasius' care in likewise honouring the two generals, John Gibbus and John the Scythian, responsible for the suppression of the Isaurian revolt in the opening years of his reign.

⁷⁹ Procop. *Wars* 4.9.1–12 with McCormick (1986) 125–9.

⁸⁰ *Nov.* 105 (537) with Cameron and Schauer (1982) 140–1.

attempt to seize power. A range of possible factors may have played a part in strengthening his resolve not to act against Justinian: recollection of their common, humble Balkan background; residual gratitude for Justinian's early advancement of his career; the close friendship between their wives Antonina and Theodora; the prestige which he continued to enjoy despite Justinian's best efforts to limit his opportunities to be in the limelight; recognition that his popularity had alienated the support of other powerful individuals which would have been necessary to the success of any attempt on the throne.⁸¹

As already noted, the main source of military challenge to emperors in the sixth century was from the rank and file of the army. Although there are some indications of mutinous behaviour in army units during the late fifth century,⁸² it is during the sixth century that there are well-documented cases. A combination of specific circumstances arising from the reconquest of north Africa from the Vandals in 533–4 spawned a mutiny by a significant proportion of troops stationed there in 536–7. Many of these soldiers married Vandal women and duly took offence when the government claimed Vandal land for itself and discriminated against Vandals who persisted in adhering to heterodox Arian Christianity. Belisarius returned from Sicily and was able to defuse some of this discontent through his personal popularity and judicious distribution of largesse, but it took military action by another general to suppress hardliners.⁸³ Discontent among the troops in north Africa, however, rumbled on during the 540s, fuelled now by delays in receipt of pay.⁸⁴ This too was the reason given for the decision of the garrison at Beroea in Mesopotamia to surrender to the Persians in 540 (Procop. *Wars* 2.7.37), and it was also the cause of problems on the eastern frontier in the 570s (Men. Prot. fr. 18.6; Joh. Eph. *Hist. eccl.* 6.28). Reduction of pay by one quarter was one of the stimuli to the serious revolt of troops at Monocarton on the eastern frontier in 588, in addition to the replacement of one general by another less popular one.⁸⁵ There was also unrest among the troops on the lower Danube in the mid-590s when the emperor Maurice tried to introduce changes in military pay: it seems he wanted to replace the cash allowances which soldiers received for clothing and equipment with distributions of the actual articles; 'the soldiers, who naturally preferred not to spend their full allowances on equipment, objected and it is likely that the attempt was abandoned'.⁸⁶

The fact remains, however, that these instances of unrest during the sixth century were localized, mostly distant from the capital, and sporadic.

⁸¹ On this last point, cf. Greatrex (2000b) 227. ⁸² Kaegi (1981) 34–40.

⁸³ Procop. *Wars* 4.14–16 with Kaegi (1981) 47–9.

⁸⁴ Procop. *Wars* 4.18.2–9, 4.26.10–12 with Kaegi (1981) 49–52.

⁸⁵ Kaegi (1981) 68–72; Whitby (1988) 286–90.

⁸⁶ Whitby (1988) 160 on Theophyl. Sim. 7.1.2–9.

With hindsight, however, they acquire greater significance, because of the mutiny which broke out at the end of the century in the Balkans and which culminated in the overthrow of the emperor Maurice in 602. The action which provoked the troops' anger was Maurice's command that they spend the winter north of the Danube. Explanations for Maurice's decision have included positing a desire to economize by making the troops live off enemy land, or alternatively a wish to punish them for recalcitrant behaviour in recent years, but neither of these is convincing. More persuasive is the argument that Maurice was acting on the basis of sound military reasoning:

The truth was that winter was regarded as the time of year when the Slavs were most vulnerable to attack. The *Strategikon* (II.4.82ff.) specifically recommends winter raids across the Danube since Slav retinues were smaller, the bare forests could offer no protection, the snow would reveal their tracks, and the frozen rivers could easily be crossed by the less mobile Romans.⁸⁷

Perhaps understandably, however, the troops were not impressed with the idea of forgoing their winter break from campaigning, and they may also have feared that Maurice would try to reintroduce economizing measures like those he attempted in the mid-590s. Certainly their initial aim was not to overthrow Maurice, but their attitude hardened when their commander Peter refused to disobey his brother's order. Eventually one of their junior officers Phocas took the lead and marched on Constantinople. Maurice's position was weakened by his unpopularity within the capital, he panicked, fled, was captured and executed, and Phocas was proclaimed emperor.⁸⁸ Given the role of the army in his elevation to the throne, it is hardly surprising that Phocas' proclamation as emperor should take place at the Hebdomon and included his being raised on a shield by soldiers (*Chron. Pasch.* 693–4; Theoph. *Chron.* 289.10–14 (AM 6094)). After a century during which the army had kept a comparatively low profile on the political stage, it suddenly reasserted itself with a vengeance.

III. ARMY AND ECONOMY

As will be apparent from the references in previous sections to donatives and material incentives, and to mutinies over slowness of or reductions in pay, the economic dimensions and ramifications of military affairs were very important. This section explores those dimensions and ramifications in more detail. To begin at the most basic level, the late Roman army was

⁸⁷ Whitby (1988) 165–6.

⁸⁸ For discussion and references, see Whitby (1988) 24–7, 165–9, including instructive comparative comments on Vitalian's ultimately unsuccessful advance on Constantinople during Anastasius' reign.

the largest employer in the empire and it was of course a standing army, which meant that its demands on the empire's economic resources were constant, as opposed to occasional. Moreover those demands increased when it was involved in active campaigning. If the net result of such campaigning had been to expand the empire's territory significantly, then this otherwise economically unproductive institution might have gone some way towards offsetting the resources it consumed. Major territorial expansion was, however, a rare phenomenon during late antiquity. The most notable exception was Justinian's reconquest of north Africa and Italy in the mid-sixth century, but even these (re-)acquisitions have been adjudged 'a dead loss' from an economic point of view.⁸⁹ The late Roman army, then, consumed resources without producing anything of real economic value in return. It was therefore a net burden on the economy – but how much of a burden?

Contemporaries had little doubt that the army was a very serious burden.⁹⁰ The anonymous author of a fourth-century pamphlet appealing to the emperor for reforms in various areas of government included a section entitled 'The reduction of military expenditure' in which he argued that 'the vast expenditure on the army . . . must be cut down . . .; because of this expenditure, the whole system of tax-collection is in trouble' (*De rebus bellicis*. 5.1, trans. Ireland in Hassall and Ireland (1979)), while the author of a military treatise, probably sixth century in date and sometimes attributed to Syrianus Magister, observed that 'the financial system was set up to take care of matters of public importance that arise on occasion . . . But it is principally concerned with paying the soldiers. Each year most of the public revenues are spent for this purpose' (Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat.* 2.4). The fact that the identity of these authors is largely unknown makes it difficult to judge how good their knowledge of imperial finances was, though their evidence is at least valuable in terms of public perceptions. Moreover it is corroborated by the presumably well-informed senior financial official who is reported to have commented with bitter sarcasm, when surveying the ruins of the frontier city of Amida after its sacking by the Persians in the mid-fourth century, 'See with what courage our cities are defended by men for whom the resources of the empire are denuded to supply them with pay!' (Amm. Marc. 20.11.5, trans. Hamilton (1986)). Although detailed statistical information does not exist, and ongoing debate about the size of the army further complicates attempts at calculations,⁹¹ the evidence that is available, combined with comparative data, supports the conclusion that the army was the largest single item of expenditure in the empire's annual budget during late antiquity, on one estimate accounting

⁸⁹ Hendy (1985) 171. Cameron (1993) 121 is less pessimistic.

⁹⁰ Cf. Hendy (1985) 158; Elton (1996b) 118. ⁹¹ Cf. pp. 174–6 above.

for at least 50 per cent of imperial expenditure and possibly as much as 75 per cent.⁹²

Expenditure on the army necessarily involved a range of discrete elements. The annual formal pay of soldiers, which in the early Empire had been their main source of income, had by the fourth century become nominal in value, due to the dramatic debasement of coinage and accompanying inflation during the third century. It was such an insignificant element in the equation that, under the impact of further depreciation of base-metal coinages, it lapsed by the end of the fourth century.⁹³ This deterioration in the value of annual pay had been offset during the third century by the distribution to soldiers of a substantial ration allowance (*annona*), comprising bread, meat, wine and oil, with an additional allowance of fodder (*capitus*) for cavalymen. What was effectively a system of payment in kind had developed as a way of surmounting the hyperinflation of the mid-third century; as the economy stabilized during the fourth century, however, the *annona* was increasingly commuted into money.⁹⁴ The deterioration in the value of annual pay was also offset by the bonuses or donatives issued to soldiers on the accession of new emperors and on the five-yearly anniversaries of such occasions; since the (apparently standard) accession donative of 5 gold *solidi* (a coin which was very stable in value) and one pound of silver was equivalent to the commuted value of almost two *annonae*, and the quinquennial donative of 5 *solidi* to the value of about one, these donatives represented a substantial and important addition to the income of soldiers.⁹⁵ In addition to these expenses, there was also the provision of clothing, armour and weapons, and in the case of the cavalry, horses. These were all given direct to troops for most of the fourth century, after which, at different times, their provision was gradually commuted into a monetary payment with which the troops themselves were expected to purchase what they needed.⁹⁶

During the period when these different elements were given to troops in kind – that is, in most cases until at least the end of the fourth century – the government acquired them from a variety of sources. The *annona* was the product of the tax system which evolved out of arrangements established by Diocletian which, broadly speaking, assessed the liability of the rural population of the empire in terms of land area and head count of humans and animals (the official units for which were the *iugum* and the

⁹² Hendy (1985) 157, (1989a) study 1, 17; cf. Treadgold (1995) 194–8 and by way of comparison, the recent estimate that ‘army cost makes up approximately three-quarters of the Empire’s budget in the mid second century’ (Duncan-Jones (1994) 45). Elton (1996b) ch. 4 also offers some interesting calculations (marred, however, by discrepancies in and between figs. 8 and 9).

⁹³ Jones (1964) 623–4. ⁹⁴ Jones (1964) 626–7, 629–30; Banaji (2001) ch. 3.

⁹⁵ Jones (1964) 624, Hendy (1989a) 18; on one estimate, one *solidus* ‘would buy about 1000 lb of bread or about 200 lb meat; a poor man might survive on less than 3 *solidi* a year’ (Davis (2000) 137).

⁹⁶ Jones (1964) 624–6.

caput respectively, though it was not long before the two were equated for fiscal purposes); this assessment was carried out by means of a census, though it unclear how regularly it was updated and revised. By totalling the army's (and bureaucracy's) need for grain, meat, wine and olive oil, and dividing that by the number of *iuga* in the empire, it was possible to calculate how much each *iugum* had to provide and so determine the tax liability of individuals.⁹⁷ All of this process was the responsibility of the praetorian prefect and his staff – in contrast to the early Empire, this important and powerful office was in late antiquity purely a civilian one with responsibility for finance and justice, and there were usually a number of praetorian prefects at any one time with responsibility for different geographical regions of the empire. Another responsibility was the organization of all of this revenue in kind reaching the troops who were not, of course, evenly distributed throughout the empire. Once collected, the produce was stored in public granaries and storehouses from which it could either be distributed to military units in the region or, if there were no military units based in the locality, transported to appropriate locations further afield using the government transport service (*cursus publicus*) which, in addition to a fast service (*cursus velox*) for the movement of officials, also included a heavy wagon service (*cursus clabularis*) for the transportation of military supplies and matériel.⁹⁸ Mounts for the cavalry were also levied as part of the tax system, supplemented by horses raised on imperial estates.⁹⁹

Provision of donatives was the responsibility of another financial official, the *comes sacrarum largitionum* ('count of the sacred largesses'), whose particular remit was coinage and precious metals. Donatives were funded from a number of special taxes which fell on the empire's wealthier classes or on urban tradesmen – the groups in late Roman society who could reasonably be expected to have access to gold and silver. On the occasion of new accessions and subsequent quinquennial anniversaries, the senatorial and curial classes were expected to pay the *aurum oblativium* (literally 'freely offered gold') and the *aurum coronarium* ('garland-like gold') respectively (the latter group being the élite of the empire's cities who served on their local town council), while the *collatio lustralis* or *chrysargyron* ('the five-yearly collection' or 'gold and silver [tax]') was, as its Latin name implies, levied on a five-yearly cycle on craftsmen and merchants (though later changed to every four years). The timing of these various taxes in the late Roman period was clearly related to the need to raise the necessary funds for the donatives which troops expected to receive at new accessions and the quinquennial anniversaries of accessions.¹⁰⁰ As for the comparative incidence of

⁹⁷ Jones (1964) 61–6, 448–58.

⁹⁸ Jones (1964) 67, 458–9, 830–1.

⁹⁹ Jones (1964) 625–6.

¹⁰⁰ Jones (1964) 430–2, 624; King (1980a).

these taxes, the following conclusions have been drawn on the basis of the surviving data concerning actual amounts levied:

What is significant about the figures for the *aurum coronarium* and the *collatio lustralis* is that an admittedly small number of nevertheless always relatively, and often absolutely, wealthy *curiales* were expected to produce appreciably less than an admittedly much larger number of relatively, and often absolutely, poor artisans, merchants and members of the professions. What is significant about those for the *aurum oblativum* is that, while they are huge in comparison with the others, the sums involved are nevertheless minute in comparison with those for senatorial revenues and fortunes. Even the larger of the two [216,000 *solidi* in 578] amounts to less than the annual cash revenue of a single major Roman senatorial household.¹⁰¹

The first of these two points perhaps helps to explain why there was such rejoicing at Anastasius' decision to abolish the *collatio lustralis* in 498 – a gesture he was able to afford at least in part because of judicious management of the economy, which resulted in the accumulation of a substantial surplus in the imperial treasury by the end of his reign.¹⁰²

Military clothing was for the most part provided under a special clothing tax known as the *vestis militaris*, also administered by the *comes sacrarum largitionum*. In the early Empire uniforms seem to have been provided through a process of the government making contracts directly with clothing manufacturers. By the end of the third century a new system had been instituted whereby the onus of providing military clothing had been placed on individual communities and then, with the passage of time, on larger administrative units, as in the following extract from an imperial law of 377:

The provinces of Thrace shall contribute one outfit of clothing [*vestis*] for each twenty land tax units [*iuga*] or personal tax units [*capita*]. Scythia and Moesia, meanwhile, shall make an annual payment of one outfit for each thirty land tax units or personal tax units. Throughout Egypt and the districts of the East one outfit shall be furnished for each thirty tax units . . .

(*Cod. Theod.* 7.6.3)

It has been estimated that Egypt, for example, must have been responsible for providing approximately 9,000 garments annually.¹⁰³ Although the tax was expressed in terms of items of clothing, it is apparent from papyrological evidence in Egypt that individuals did not pay the tax in kind, but in money, which was then used by the local authorities to purchase the amount of clothing stipulated by the central authorities. The likeliest explanation for the apparent oddity of clothing vocabulary being used as the unit of revenue for what was in fact a money tax is that it served to remind the taxpayers of the practical purpose towards which their money was

¹⁰¹ Hendy (1985) 175–6.

¹⁰² Jones (1964) 237.

¹⁰³ Sheridan (1998) 88.

contributing.¹⁰⁴ In addition to the clothing acquired through the clothing tax the government also produced some directly through state-operated textile mills – woollen (*gynaecia*) and linen (*linyphia*) – and dyeworks (*baphia*); those in the western half of the empire in the early fifth century are listed in the administrative document known as the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Production of military clothing was not their exclusive function, since they also made clothing for civil servants and high-quality garments for the imperial court, but the latter must have accounted for a relatively small proportion of output.¹⁰⁵

Unlike clothing, where much of the production could be left to private enterprise, security considerations required manufacture of armour and weapons to be closely supervised by the government. This was done in late antiquity through state-owned and -run arms factories (*fabricae*) whose empire-wide geographical distribution in the early fifth century is also known from the *Notitia Dignitatum* (fig. II.4).¹⁰⁶ The location of the factories in relation to the frontier regions along the Rhine and Danube implies an underlying rationale to their distribution.¹⁰⁷ In addition to factories which produced general arms, there were a number which had specialized output – for example, armour for heavy cavalry, bows, arrows, lances and artillery (*ballistae*). Iron, wood and charcoal were levied by the praetorian prefect to supply the factories,¹⁰⁸ and the siting of some factories well away from the frontier regions has been plausibly explained in terms of their proximity to iron-producing regions of the empire.¹⁰⁹

As already noted there was a gradual movement towards commutation of taxes in kind into money taxes (increasingly in gold) from the late fourth century onwards, though it was by no means uniform or universal; the trend was more pronounced earlier in the western half of the empire than in the east.¹¹⁰ According to one ancient source, the systematization of commutation in the east was ‘an attempt to prevent the exploitation of the tax-payers by the soldiers through constant demands for foodstuffs and provisions, since the collection of the taxes in gold and their forwarding to Constantinople would severely limit this possibility’.¹¹¹ However, commutation was also an attractive option from the government’s point of view for a variety of less altruistic reasons. It greatly simplified the process of collection of taxes, it significantly eased the headache of transporting large quantities of grain and other foodstuffs from producers to (military) consumers, and it also created the possibility of building up a reserve of

¹⁰⁴ Sheridan (1998) 89–90 for this last point and more generally ch. 3; Jones (1964) 624–5, 836–7.

¹⁰⁵ Jones (1964) 836–7; Wild (1976).

¹⁰⁶ Jones (1964) 625, 834–6; James (1988).

¹⁰⁷ James (1988) 262–5 with helpful maps at 327–31.

¹⁰⁸ Jones (1964) 835.

¹⁰⁹ James (1988) 267–9.

¹¹⁰ Jones (1964) 207–8, 629–30.

¹¹¹ Haldon (1994) 119 with reference to Malalas, 16.3 Thurn = 394.8–10 Dindorf.

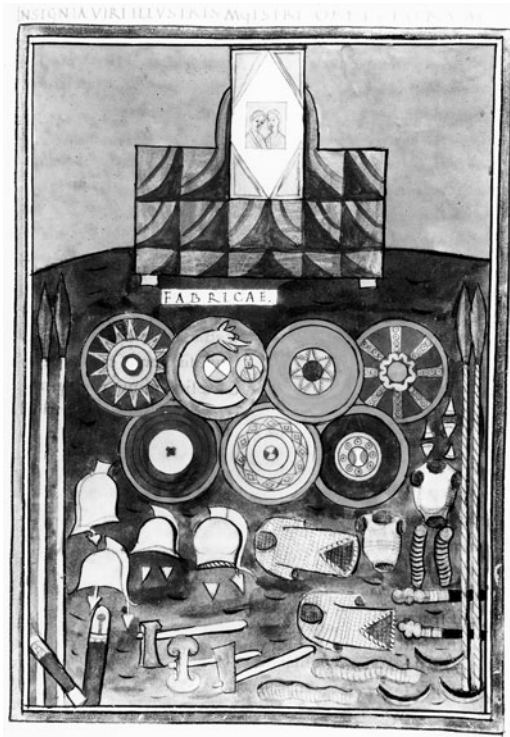


Figure 11.4 Page from a MS of *Notitia Dignitatum* depicting the insignia of the *magister officiorum*, who was responsible for the *fabricae* – hence the weapons and armour.

gold and silver in the imperial treasury.¹¹² With regard to the elements of military expenditure detailed above, the shift towards commutation did not mean the end of the *annona* in kind. While Anastasius systematically commuted the greater part of the land tax to payment in gold in the eastern half of the empire, a proportion (usually known as the *embole*) was still levied in kind specifically to supply local military units, an arrangement which appears to have continued to some degree throughout the sixth century. At the same time, compulsory purchase or requisitioning of foodstuffs by the army from local populations (*coemptio* or *synone*) was forbidden apart from in exceptional circumstances.¹¹³ Although the evidence is limited, it looks as if sixth-century soldiers received cash to purchase their clothing and arms since an attempt by the emperor Maurice to return to the previous arrangement proved unpopular with the troops, while

¹¹² Hendy (1989) 17. ¹¹³ Jones (1964) 235, 671–3; Haldon (1994) 118–22.

cavalrymen were generally given money to buy their horses. Since the state textile mills and arms factories remained in existence in the sixth century and Justinian issued a law suppressing private manufacturers of arms, soldiers were presumably expected to purchase these items from these government outlets, though the poor state of attire and weapons of some, which prompted Maurice's attempted reform, shows that this expectation was not always realistic and that soldiers often spent some of the money on other things.¹¹⁴

There were some important regional variations on these general developments in the eastern half of the empire, specifically with reference to Thrace. This region had suffered the inroads of foreign invaders on a regular basis since the final quarter of the fourth century – Goths in the late fourth century, Huns for much of the first half of the fifth century, more Goths in the second half after the break-up of Attila's empire, and Bulgars in the early sixth century – and its agricultural productivity had suffered.¹¹⁵ As a result the tax yield was too low to support the army in the area and so this was the one region where Anastasius did allow the compulsory purchase of supplies by the military on a regular basis:

Since the taxes are not collected in full in Thrace because the number of farmers has been reduced due to foreign attacks and the tax in kind is not sufficient for the troops stationed there, and since above all else the military units there need to be fed without interruption, it is not possible for the soldiers there to be fed without recourse to requisitioning [*synone*].¹¹⁶

The poverty of the region is presumably also at least part of the explanation for Justinian's decision to establish the *quaestura exercitus* ('quaestorship of the army') in 536. Although the full details are a little unclear because the relevant law is only partially preserved, the provinces of Moesia and Scythia on the lower Danube and the Asian provinces of Caria, Cyprus and the Islands were detached from the praetorian prefecture of the east and placed under the authority of a new official, the quaestor of the army, effectively an additional praetorian prefect.¹¹⁷ While this configuration of provinces at first appears odd, the rationale seems to have been to ensure the efficient provision of supplies to the armed forces on the lower Danube from the resources of the wealthier and more secure Asian provinces, presumably making use of the latter's shipping to transport the supplies to the Black Sea and up the Danube.¹¹⁸ The continued existence of the *quaestura* in the later sixth century is confirmed by a law of 575 (Justin II, *Nov.* 11), before

¹¹⁴ Jones (1964) 670–1; James (1988) 281–2. ¹¹⁵ Whitby (2000c).

¹¹⁶ *Cod. Iust.* 10.27.2.10; Jones (1964) 235.

¹¹⁷ Indeed, another source refers to the position as 'prefect of Scythia': John Lydus, *Mag.* 2.28–9; cf. p. 325 above.

¹¹⁸ The law is Justinian, *Nov.* 41 with discussion in Jones (1964) 280.

it eventually metamorphosed during the seventh century into the naval theme of the *Karabisianoï*.¹¹⁹

A further point at which army and economy intersect is the evidence for soldiers acquiring and farming land. During the fourth century an allotment of land was one of the discharge options open to veterans, which implies that soldiers were not normally already in possession of land while serving, a conclusion supported by other evidence and arguments.¹²⁰ In the fifth and sixth centuries, however, there is evidence of garrison troops in frontier regions (*limitanei*) being given land to farm.¹²¹ This does not, however, mean that they had become 'soldier farmers' or a peasant militia, with all the pejorative connotations these phrases imply for their military worth.¹²² They also continued to receive a salary, at least until Justinian's reign, and 'they need not have physically farmed their lands in person, or at least not been the main labour force for their property'.¹²³ Indeed, possession of land in frontier regions could provide troops with a personal stake in the security of the region and an added incentive to resist invaders, as the late Roman government seems also to have appreciated in its dealings with foreign tribes settled on imperial territory in return for military service.¹²⁴ These developments could be seen as anticipating one aspect of the arrangements which emerged in the second half of the seventh century whereby, under the successive impact of twenty-five years of fighting the Persians and the onslaught of the Arabs, late Roman armies were regrouped within Anatolia into the so-called themes. While the best soldiers continued to be paid by salary, they were supplemented by a militia who supported themselves by farming land but were liable to call-up when needed.¹²⁵

Thus far the focus has been on the economic impact of the army arising from the sheer existence of the institution and the need to maintain it in peacetime. Mounting a military expedition or assembling an army to meet an enemy in battle, however, posed additional logistical problems which placed further demands on the empire's economy. One rather precise index of those demands is the weight of coinage, which has been observed to become lighter at times which correlate with increased military expenditure associated with major campaigns, presumably due to manipulation of the metal content with a view to making what was available go further: 'it seems clear . . . that any extraordinary military effort imposed a heavy strain on the financial resources of the empire, and this strain was likely to

¹¹⁹ This development does not, however, warrant the assumption of Treadgold (1995) 15–16 that the original *quaestura* was also primarily a naval command, particularly since it is clear that the sixth-century quaestor's duties, like those of praetorian prefects, also included the administration of justice in the relevant provinces (Justinian, *Nov.* 50).

¹²⁰ Jones (1964) 636, 649–51. ¹²¹ Jones (1964) 653–4, 663.

¹²² Isaac (1988), an important article cited with apparent approval in one sentence, then promptly ignored in the next, by Ferrill (1991b) 50–1; cf. MacMullen (1988) 175–6.

¹²³ Whitby (1995) 112–13. ¹²⁴ Whitby (1995) 114–16. ¹²⁵ Haldon (1990a) ch. 6.

be reflected in a fairly immediate and direct way in its coinage'.¹²⁶ A good sense of what expeditions might involve in practical terms is conveyed by the following description of Zeno's preparations for a campaign against the Goths in Thrace in the 470s:

Zeno speedily summoned all the legions, both those stationed near to the Black Sea and those throughout Asia and the eastern districts. A large force assembled from all quarters; baggage wagons were prepared, cattle and grain were purchased, and all things of use to an army were made ready.¹²⁷

An upper limit for the scale of repercussions of military expeditions is provided by three episodes from successive centuries during late antiquity. Julian's assembly of his forces in Syria prior to his invasion of Persia in 363, numbering at least 65,000 men, precipitated a famine in the city of Antioch requiring the import of grain from Egypt to alleviate it;¹²⁸ Leo's disastrous expedition against the Vandals in 468, involving an armada of perhaps a thousand ships and a hundred thousand troops, is reported to have cost somewhere between 7.5 and 9 million *solidi* – 'a sum that probably exceeded a whole year's revenue';¹²⁹ and the Roman army assembled to meet the Persian invasion of 502, comprising 52,000 soldiers according to one contemporary local source, required special arrangements for feeding the troops involving the appointment of a deputy praetorian prefect on the spot to organize the baking of the requisite bread and the dispatch of additional supplies from Egypt.¹³⁰ These expeditions, the largest known during late antiquity, are, however, atypical. Armies of 10,000 to 25,000 men feature more regularly in the sources: one of Constantius II's generals commanded a force of 25,000 in 356, Julian's army at the battle of Strasbourg in the same year numbered 13,000, forces of 15,000 and 10,000 confronted Balkan invaders in 499 and 505, Belisarius had armies of 25,000 and 20,000 respectively at the battles of Dara and Callinicum in 530 and 531, while his Vandal expedition comprised about 15,000 men and 600 ships.¹³¹ Even so, the logistical requirements of forces in this sort of range were still formidable: on one estimate, Julian would have needed 30 tons of grain, 13 tons of fodder and 30,000 gallons of water every day for his army of 13,000 at Strasbourg.¹³²

That was for an essentially stationary army assembled to fight a set-piece battle; an army on the move presented even greater challenges. When that movement occurred within the empire, then it might be possible to organize

¹²⁶ Hendy (1985) 233; cf. pp. 324–8 above.

¹²⁷ Malchus fr. 18,1; in the event, the campaign did not take place.

¹²⁸ Matthews (1989a) 409–11. ¹²⁹ Hendy (1985) 221, 223.

¹³⁰ Ps.-Joshua Stylites 54, 70, 77 with Jones (1964) 673, Scharf (1991a).

¹³¹ Jones (1964) 684–5. ¹³² Elton (1996b) 237.

the building up of supply dumps along the anticipated route, which would reduce the burden to be carried by the army itself. For example, in advance of his planned campaign against Julian in 360, Constantius II had 3 million bushels of grain stockpiled in Raetia (Julian, *Ep. ad Ath.* 286b). That the fourth-century administrative apparatus kept itself well informed about the supply situation is also evident from the case of the government official Antoninus who deserted to the Persians in 359: before absconding, he was able to extract from army records a great deal of valuable information about the logistical state of Roman forces in the eastern half of the empire:

He devoted himself to prying secretly into all the departments of state. He had a command of both languages [i.e. Latin and Greek] which enabled him to examine the records and to note what forces were serving where and in what strength, and what would be their objective when they took to the field; and he was indefatigable in his inquiries into the stocks of arms and provisions and other military supplies. (Amm. Marc. 18.5.1–2, trans. Hamilton (1986)).

When such forward planning was not possible or when it came to invading enemy territory, the challenges multiplied, for not only were vast quantities of food for men and horses required but also substantial numbers of pack animals and wagons to carry the supplies – and the pack animals themselves needed to be fed, further increasing the weight of food to be transported.¹³³ One ancient source refers to an army of 10,000 being accompanied by 520 wagons (Marc. Com. s.a. 499), while according to one modern estimate, an army of 10,000 (comprising 6,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry) would have needed more than 9,000 mules to campaign for three weeks, suggesting that while an expedition for this length of time was ‘logistically quite feasible . . . armies substantially larger than this would rapidly lose flexibility and speed’.¹³⁴ Of course other variables also impinged on the size of baggage-train required: the time of year would affect the scope for living off the land, as also would the character of the terrain through which the army passed – imponderables which are difficult to factor into generalized reconstructions such as that above.

In the final analysis, however, whatever the precise mechanisms for paying soldiers or the economic strains of individual campaigns, the fundamental determinant of the Empire’s ability to maintain an effective army was the maintenance of an adequate income to support that army, and in the technological and economic conditions of antiquity the overwhelming source of such income (in the form of taxes) was of course agricultural land. During the course of late antiquity the western half of the Empire

¹³³ Elton (1996b) 238–9 for references in the sources to use of wagons and pack animals.

¹³⁴ Haldon (1999) 289–1.

increasingly lost control of territory which in turn affected its capacity to acquire enough revenue to sustain its armed forces, and in due course it ceased to be a viable political entity; the eastern half, on the other hand, continued without serious loss of territory until the early seventh century. The final section of this chapter will investigate in more detail the reasons for these divergent fates.

IV. WESTERN COLLAPSE AND EASTERN SURVIVAL

The fate of the Roman empire during late antiquity has exercised the intellects and imaginations of countless individuals over the centuries, most famously in such substantial and influential works as Augustine's *City of God* and Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. A primary stimulus to this fascination has usually been the attempt to understand the demise of Roman political control in western Europe during the course of the fifth century: how could a state which had dominated the Mediterranean world with apparent ease for six centuries lose control of half its territory, including the city from which it had originated? Inevitably, there can be no easy or simple explanations for such a fundamental reordering of the Mediterranean world, but the challenge it presents is further complicated by the fact that it was only the western half of the Empire which ceased to exist as a political entity in the late fifth century, whereas the eastern half continued to exist in one form or another for a further millennium. With the passage of time, that surviving half developed in ways which took it further and further away from its Roman roots – a development reflected in its modern designation as the Byzantine empire; until the early seventh century, however, it remained recognizably the Roman empire of late antiquity. Any attempt to explain the collapse of the west must therefore also accommodate the survival of the east, a fact which serves as a useful constraint on the temptation to indulge in all-embracing generalizations. A hypothesis based on a posited decline in population, for example, must not only demonstrate its role in the demise of the west but also explain why it did not affect the east in the same way, or at least to the same extent.

Given the focus of this volume, however, it would be inappropriate to canvass the full range of explanations that have been offered for the divergent fates of east and west.¹³⁵ In what follows, the concern is rather to examine the extent to which military factors played a role. One ancient

¹³⁵ For a good survey, see Jones (1964) ch. 25, though, in keeping with the character of the work as a whole, he refrains almost entirely from discussing modern scholarship; for a thoughtful overview of some central aspects of the historiography, see Liebeschuetz (1990) 236–52.

commentator had no doubt that military factors had indeed played an important role in the deterioration of the Empire's power, and he was also in no doubt as to where the blame lay:

Constantine did something else which gave the barbarians unhindered access to the Roman empire. By the forethought of Diocletian, the frontiers of the empire everywhere were covered, as I have stated, with cities, garrisons and fortifications which housed the whole army. Consequently, it was impossible for the barbarians to cross the frontier because they were confronted at every point by forces capable of resisting their attacks. Constantine destroyed this security by removing most of the troops from the frontiers and stationing them in cities which did not need assistance, thus both stripping of protection those being molested by the barbarians and subjecting the cities left alone by them to the outrages of the soldiers, so that henceforth most have become deserted. Moreover, he enervated the troops by allowing them to devote themselves to shows and luxuries. In plain terms, Constantine was the origin and beginning of the present destruction of the empire. (Zos. 2.34)

Although Zosimus' analysis has found, and continues to find, its supporters,¹³⁶ it presents many problems which can be briefly enumerated here. Its polemical tone betrays the author's antagonism towards Constantine (this is even clearer when his whole account of Constantine's reign is read); like Eunapius, the writer on whom he relied heavily for his account of the fourth century, Zosimus was a committed pagan who was therefore predisposed to admire Diocletian, persecutor of the Church, and revile Constantine, the first emperor to lend his support to Christianity. The passage's sharply drawn contrast between a Diocletian who strengthened frontier defences and a Constantine who neglected them is belied by archaeological evidence which shows Constantine to have been energetic on this front,¹³⁷ while Zosimus' assertion that the development of mobile field forces based away from the frontiers was a retrograde step strategically has been described as 'a wilful misunderstanding of the strategy of the late Roman Empire':

It was impossible to hold the frontier line against all attack, since external enemies retained the initiative and could always concentrate superior forces locally. Instead, the screen of garrisons in the frontier zone would, at least in theory, check minor incursions, and hinder major invasions by holding fortified towns and supply-bases, and strongpoints of all kinds along the lines of communication. This would protect the civil population (tax-payers, if nothing else), deny food to the enemy, and gain time to concentrate mobile forces for counter-attack. The invaders would either be forced to disperse over the countryside to forage, where they could be hunted down piecemeal by small mobile detachments; or if they massed together,

¹³⁶ Gibbon (1994) 1.619–21; Ferrill (1986) 43–9.

¹³⁷ S. Johnson (1983); Whittaker (1994) 206–7.

they could be brought to battle, when the Roman mobile army, better armed and disciplined and regularly provisioned, had a good chance of winning against numerical odds. Once defeated in the field, invaders could be pursued into their homeland, and reprisals would follow until they made peace.¹³⁸

This strategy made particular sense in the late Roman context when the Empire faced simultaneous threats on a number of frontiers from neighbours to the east and the north who were better organized than had been the case in earlier centuries. Moreover, it has been observed that Ammianus' account of military affairs during the third quarter of the fourth century 'reveals that this innovation had considerably enhanced the army's power to react'.¹³⁹

Although his claim about the enervation of urban-based troops is also questionable, since 'the corruption of soldiers who lived in cities was a literary commonplace',¹⁴⁰ Zosimus was not the only writer in late antiquity to express reservations about the quality of late Roman troops. Indeed, some scholars have assembled a litany of such complaints which cumulatively would seem to point inexorably towards only one conclusion.¹⁴¹ Yet the moralizing character of these complaints should give pause for thought, while careful consideration of individual instances often reveals problems with taking them at face value. Consider, for example, the following passage from Ammianus Marcellinus' account of the start of the emperor Julian's reign:

These moral blemishes were accompanied by shameful defects in military discipline. Instead of their traditional chants the troops practised effeminate music-hall songs. The soldier's bed was no longer a stone, as of old, but a yielding down mattress. Their cups were heavier than their swords, since they now thought it beneath them to drink from earthenware, and they expected to be housed in marble, although it is recorded in ancient history that a Spartan soldier was severely punished for daring to appear under a roof at all during a campaign. Moreover, the troops of this period were brutal and greedy in their behaviour towards their own people, and weak and cowardly in the face of the enemy.

(22.4.6–7a, trans. Hamilton (1986))

This description has been taken by some as a general indictment of the Roman army of the mid-fourth century.¹⁴² However, with greater attention to its context, it becomes apparent that Ammianus' strictures relate

¹³⁸ Tomlin (1987) 119–20 (who acknowledges that the strategy also had its weaknesses); cf. Tomlin (2000) 168, where he cites the dictum of Frederick the Great: 'He who defends everything, defends nothing.'

¹³⁹ Crump (1975) 65 (who also acknowledges that the strategy had its weaknesses as well).

¹⁴⁰ Warmington (1953) 175; cf. Wheeler (1996). ¹⁴¹ MacMullen (1988) 175.

¹⁴² Gibbon (1994) 1.620 n. 129; Demandt (1965) 28.

very specifically to the élite palace guard in Constantinople, the *scholae palatinae*.¹⁴³ Similar care needs to be taken with other such complaints.¹⁴⁴

A variation on this theme is the concern expressed by Vegetius, author of a military manual in the late fourth century, about a decline in the level of training soldiers were receiving and in their discipline (*Mil.* 1.28).¹⁴⁵ The more specific nature of this criticism lends it greater credence, so that it has gained a place in some modern analyses,¹⁴⁶ yet there remain grounds for caution. First, Vegetius' criticisms include a specific statement about soldiers' armour which is open to doubt:

From the founding of the City [of Rome] down to the time of the deified Gratian [375–83], the infantry army was equipped with both armour and helmets. But upon the intervention of neglect and idleness field exercises ceased, and arms which soldiers rarely donned began to be thought heavy. So they petitioned the emperor that they should hand in first the armour, then helmets. Thus with their chests and heads unprotected our soldiers have often been destroyed in engagements against the Goths through the multitude of their archers. Even after so many defeats, which led to the sacking of so many cities, no one has troubled to restore either armour or helmets to the infantry.

(1.20, trans. Milner (1993))

Although some scholars have taken this statement at face value,¹⁴⁷ others have drawn attention to the fact that it is a literary commonplace in Roman historical writers of earlier centuries and is belied by iconographic evidence of the fifth and sixth centuries;¹⁴⁸ it is possible that Vegetius was generalizing from a specific episode.¹⁴⁹

Secondly, Ammianus' narrative of the army in action during the third quarter of the fourth century, the period immediately prior to when Vegetius was probably writing, does not suggest any falling off in traditional military skills such as the construction of camps (to which Vegetius devotes much attention in book 1 of his manual),¹⁵⁰ while sixth-century sources indicate considerable continuity in training practices.¹⁵¹ Nor does there appear to have been a significant decline in discipline during battle. The fourth-century army undoubtedly suffered some major defeats, but it is arguable

¹⁴³ Wheeler (1996) 246–7. Wheeler's interpretation of the *palatini* in Amm. Marc. 22.4.1–8 as the palace guard rather than the civilian palace administration is strengthened by Ammianus' comment (22.4.5) that 'triumphs in battle were replaced by triumphs at table'.

¹⁴⁴ See Lee (1998) 233–6 for discussion of further examples.

¹⁴⁵ See Milner (1993) xxv–xxix for the date, and cf. pp. 287, 372 above.

¹⁴⁶ Including Montesquieu in the eighteenth century (as summarized by Liebeschuetz (1990) 236–7); see also Ferrill (1986) 128–9; Southern and Dixon (1996) 54–5.

¹⁴⁷ Ferrill (1986) 50; MacMullen (1988) 175, 274 n. 15; Liebeschuetz (1990) 25.

¹⁴⁸ Coulston (1990) 149; Milner (1993) 18 n. 2; Elton (1996b) 110–11; cf. p. 351 above.

¹⁴⁹ Milner (1993) 18 n. 6; Elton (1996b) 110, who refers to an incident from 379 when some Roman troops made a point of relinquishing their heavier armour in order to enhance their chances of catching Gothic raiders unawares (Zos. 4.25.2) – though in this instance, the tactic resulted in success, not defeat.

¹⁵⁰ Tomlin (1987) 117; Elton (1996b) 235. ¹⁵¹ See ch. 10 in this volume.

whether these were due to poor fighting ability. The most notorious cases – Julian's Persian expedition (363) and the Gothic victory over Valens at Adrianople (378) – are attributable above all to poor planning and decision making.¹⁵² The heavy losses of seasoned troops in 363 and 378 were serious blows, but these setbacks were never such as to jeopardize the territorial integrity of the empire, and it is worth emphasizing that both affected the eastern half of the empire more immediately than the west. Surviving sources from the fifth century do not provide battle narratives with the same degree of detail as Ammianus' history, but the army in the west during the first half of the fifth century was certainly not ineffective, halting two attempted invasions of Italy by Alaric in the opening years of the century, dealing with Radagaisus in 405/6, containing the Goths in Gaul in 418 and seeing off Attila in Gaul in 451. It was only in the 460s and 470s that its military capability appears to have been seriously eroded, while the fact that the army in the eastern half of the empire maintained a generally competent fighting record during much of the fifth and sixth centuries is a warning against the dangers of generalizing too readily about the state of military discipline.¹⁵³

Another variation on the theme of decline in quality relates specifically to the *limitanei*, that is, the troops deployed in frontier provinces. The mistaken notion that *limitanei* were 'soldier farmers' has already been noted in the previous section, but the more general claim has also been made that they were treated as second-class troops by emperors and must therefore have been second class in terms of performance: 'the *limitanei* probably went into immediate but gradual decline [from Constantine onwards] – the evidence for their tactical deployment is nearly non-existent'.¹⁵⁴ The fact that *limitanei* are rarely mentioned in narrative sources does not, however, mean they were unused and useless: it reflects rather the fact that the Roman historiographical tradition focused on major set-piece battles in which *limitanei* were less likely to have participated, dealing, as they must have been, primarily with the interception of smaller-scale raiding parties.¹⁵⁵ As for privileges, there is no doubt that soldiers in the units of the mobile field army received greater recognition than *limitanei*, but the latter did none the less receive privileges (such as tax concessions).¹⁵⁶ Units of *limitanei* were sometimes incorporated into field armies, while Justinian's legislation in the mid-sixth century continued to treat them as an integral part of the

¹⁵² Lee (1996) 212–14; cf. Elton (1996b) 266; Nicasie (1998). Tomlin (2000) 173–4 emphasizes the role of the indiscipline of a Roman cavalry unit at Adrianople, but this was only one factor among many and ought not to be used as the basis for generalizations about the state of discipline in the army as a whole.

¹⁵³ Cf. Elton (1992), (1996b) 265–8; Whitby (2000b) (2004) 173–4; cf. pp. 342, 374 above.

¹⁵⁴ Ferrill (1986) 46–9 (quotation at 49). ¹⁵⁵ Cf. Elton (1996b) 200–1, 206–8.

¹⁵⁶ See e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 7.20.4 (325) (where *limitanei* appear under the earlier, alternative nomenclature of *ripenses*).

army (including re-establishing them in north Africa after its successful reconquest in the 530s) – all of which implies that this category of soldier was regarded as having at least some military value.¹⁵⁷

A final issue which falls under the general heading of ‘quality’ is that of ‘barbarization’ of the army, a development which has sometimes been seen as contributing to the Empire’s problems.¹⁵⁸ The term traditionally refers to the steady rise in the number of individuals from outside the empire who found employment within the Roman army during the course of the fourth century, some of whom even became senior commanders. It is, however, difficult to see how ‘barbarization’ in this sense seriously compromised the military effectiveness of the late Roman army. That the possibility should have been entertained is due in part to the ill-founded assumption that the loyalty of, for example, Germanic tribesmen serving in the Roman army must have been suspect when they found themselves fighting against Germanic tribes. There is little evidence to support such a conclusion, which also overlooks the fragmented nature of tribal groupings beyond the Rhine and Danube, and underestimates the Romanizing potential of army service. ‘When young barbarians were enrolled in Roman units mixed with experienced soldiers and trained by officers and NCOs of long service, they became simply professional soldiers.’¹⁵⁹ There is certainly no suggestion in Ammianus’ detailed narrative of warfare during the third quarter of the fourth century that soldiers of non-Roman origin serving in the Roman army were inferior in quality.¹⁶⁰

If, then, there was no significant deterioration in the effectiveness of Roman soldiers, was it perhaps the case that they were overwhelmed by superior enemy numbers? A number of difficulties present themselves with any simple explanation along these lines. To begin with, the image of vast hordes of fierce northerners overwhelming the empire’s frontiers which a phrase such as ‘barbarian invasions’ tends to evoke is belied by the likely size of northern tribal forces. Of course, if calculating the size of the late Roman army is fraught with difficulty, then it is even harder to determine the numbers of the empire’s foreign enemies. Available figures for enemy armies in this period suggest that maximum sizes were usually something of the order

¹⁵⁷ Jones (1964) 651, 661–723.

¹⁵⁸ Gibbon (1994) 1.623–5; Ferrill (1986) 19; MacMullen (1988) 176.

¹⁵⁹ Liebeschuetz (1990) 25; for critiques of ‘barbarization’ as a factor, see also Jones (1964) 621–2; Elton (1996b) 136–52; Lee (1998) 223–4; Nicasic (1998) ch. 4. For helpful discussion of some of the issues raised by use of the term ‘barbarians’ in the late Roman context, see Garnsey and Humfress (2001) 95–104.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Barbarization’ is sometimes also used in the another sense – with reference to the way in which the Roman army, particularly in the west during the fifth century, came to rely increasingly on allied units, or federates, consisting entirely of non-Romans and commanded by non-Romans. This was a more serious development with significant implications for the fate of the west, which will become apparent below.

of 30,000 to 40,000,¹⁶¹ while the lack of anything other than the most basic sort of logistical structure to support their campaigns implies that forces will more often have been rather smaller in size, as does the characteristically fragmented nature of Germanic tribal organization. There certainly were invasions on a large scale, the long-term significance of some of which is not to be underestimated – notably that of 406 (see further below) – but these were the exception rather than the rule, and the sources suggest that smaller-scale raiding was more common.¹⁶² Significantly, what may well have been the largest influx of a northern people into the empire – that of the Goths in 376 – actually took place with imperial approval and under imperial supervision.

In fact the empire's most powerful enemy in late antiquity was situated adjacent to the eastern half – Sasanid Persia. This was the empire's only neighbour which controlled substantial economic resources and possessed the administrative infrastructure to mobilize those resources for military purposes on a large scale. One would therefore have expected the greatest threat to the empire's territorial integrity to have come from this direction, in the east. That threat was particularly realized in the mid-fourth and mid-sixth centuries when the energetic Shapur II and Khusro I were kings, and especially in the early seventh century when the Persians, under Khusro II, occupied substantial tracts of the eastern provinces and threatened Constantinople itself in 626. That successive Roman emperors took this threat seriously throughout late antiquity is reflected in their deployment of troops and investment in fortifications in the eastern frontier region. Yet the fact remains that the Roman Empire rarely suffered territorial losses to the Persians during late antiquity, and only on a really significant scale in the early seventh century. This paradox can be accounted for in a number of ways. It is a reflection partly of limited Persian aims throughout most of late antiquity, partly of the increasingly developed deployment of diplomatic communications to tackle disagreements between the two powers, partly of the Persians, like the Romans, facing the distraction of threats on other fronts, and partly of the inability of either empire to launch major expeditions against the other without having their intentions betrayed or discovered.¹⁶³

One perhaps less obvious military factor which warrants attention is that of civil war.¹⁶⁴ In general terms, civil war was bound to have a negative impact on the military capabilities of the empire insofar as it involved the redeployment of military resources away from external concerns towards

¹⁶¹ Cf. Elton (1996b) 72–3; cf. pp. 314–16 above.

¹⁶² For evidence and discussion, see Jones (1964) 194–6; Goffart (1980) 231–4; Whittaker (1994) 210–13; Elton (1996b) 47–56, 72–3.

¹⁶³ Jones (1964) 1030–1; Blockley (1992) 151–68; Lee (1993b).

¹⁶⁴ Shaw (1999) gives this factor effective emphasis.

ends which entailed the destruction of some of those resources, irrespective of which side in the conflict was ultimately successful. Constantius II's defeat of the forces of the usurper Magnentius at the battle of Mursa in 351 is a case in point; as one contemporary commentator observed of the battle with a tone of bitterness, 'great resources were wasted, adequate for any number of foreign wars'.¹⁶⁵ The great problem is to quantify the extent and significance of the losses on occasions such as these. What is clear, however, is that the negative impact of civil war was not felt evenly across the empire, for a preponderance of civil wars during late antiquity occurred in the western half of the empire. During the fourth century significant internal conflict in the east occurred between Constantine and Licinius in 324 and Valens and Procopius in 365; during the fifth century, between Zeno and Basiliscus, and Zeno and Illus, in the late 470s and mid-480s respectively, and between Anastasius and the Isaurian rebels in the 490s; and during the sixth century, between Anastasius and Vitalian in the mid-510s – a total of six major civil wars across the space of three centuries. By contrast, almost as many can be identified in the west during the fourth century alone – Constantine and Maxentius in 312, Constantine II and Constans in 340, Constantius II and Magnentius in 351–3, Theodosius I and Magnus Maximus in the late 388 and Theodosius I and Eugenius in 394¹⁶⁶ – while the fifth century witnessed even more cases. To be sure, the east–west divide is not quite as clear cut as this might suggest, since three of the fourth-century western cases did involve the deployment of eastern resources in the west (those involving Constantius II and Theodosius I). However, since these cases involved the defeat of western forces, it was the west which lost more in the way of military resources, while the deployment of eastern forces to the west rarely occurred during the fifth century when the incidence of internal conflict there escalated alarmingly – the obvious exception is the eastern expedition of 425 which overthrew the usurper John and installed the juvenile Valentinian III on the western throne. Why there should have been this bias towards the west in the pattern of civil war remains to be explained satisfactorily. However, in addition to the depletion of manpower it necessarily entailed, its regular occurrence during the fifth century not only served to undermine the symbolic potency of imperial authority in the west but also contributed to the material loss of significant areas of territory.

It is this progressive loss of territory in the west which is of fundamental importance because land was the overwhelming source of government revenue and any serious reduction in the volume of revenue would

¹⁶⁵ Eutr. 10.12 (though note the cautionary remarks on the significance of this episode by Wardman (1984)).

¹⁶⁶ I exclude Julian's march against Constantius II in 360–1 since Constantius' unexpected death before their forces had engaged resolved the issue without bloodshed.

compromise the government's ability to maintain at adequate levels the chief consumer of that revenue – the army. Loss of territory of course also had implications for manpower and recruitment. Although civil war played a contributory role in the loss, as will be outlined below, the process can also be traced back to two crucial events – the admission of the Goths to the empire in 376, and the invasion of Gaul by the Vandals and other Germanic tribes in 406. The admission of the Goths by Valens need not have been of fatal significance, even after the Roman losses at the battle of Adrianople in 378, for they were but one more in a long line of barbarian settlers within the empire and their success at Adrianople did not alter the balance of power decisively. In the ensuing decades, however, the Goths, though contained, remained a semi-independent entity within the Balkans who then moved to the west under the leadership of Alaric at the start of the fifth century. The breakdown of cooperation between the imperial courts at Ravenna and Constantinople, resulting from the bitter infighting and rivalry between Stilicho, the dominant figure in the western court from 395 to 408, and a succession of leading individuals at the eastern court (notably Rufinus and Eutropius), did not help in the resolution of 'the Gothic problem', but even the eventual sacking of Rome by the Goths in 410 was not fatal, whatever the symbolic significance of that event. Alaric died soon after, and the Goths were in due course contained by the Roman general Constantius who settled them in southern Gaul. With the passage of time, they might well have been integrated into the society of late Roman Gaul, but their presence there during a period of recurrent civil war and occasional foreign invasion heightened their importance as a military resource which different parties sought to exploit. For example, Constantius used Gothic forces to defeat the usurper Jovinus and one of the Vandal groups in Spain,¹⁶⁷ while Aëtius' forces against Attila in 451 included a significant Gothic component (Jord. *Get.* 180ff.). Their independent identity and influence were gradually enhanced to the point where they were able increasingly to expand the territory under their control so that important regions were no longer paying taxes to the imperial government. The ways in which northern peoples contributed to the collapse of the west could therefore be much more complex than the traditional language of 'barbarian invasions' implies.

While the Goths originally entered the empire in 376 with imperial permission, the advent of the Vandals and other tribal groupings at the end of 406 was a clear case of invasion. Its success is not necessarily a reflection on the poor quality of Roman troops stationed on the Rhine, for this invasion involved four or five separate groups, occurred in the middle

¹⁶⁷ Olymp. fr. 18 ; Jord. *Get.* 163–6; Hydatius 70.

of winter, and at a time when Roman defenders had been redeployed to deal with another invasion across the middle Danube the previous year (that led by Radagaisus). Attempts to contain these invaders during the years immediately following were not aided by the imperial court having, of necessity, to focus on the more immediately pressing threat posed by the Gothic forces of Alaric in Italy and by the political chaos which ensued from the execution of Stilicho in 408. In the short term the groups who crossed the Rhine at the end of 406 caused significant disruption to normal life in Gaul and Spain, but it was the longer-term trajectory of one of them, the Vandals, which proved to be of critical importance: after progressing southwards into Spain, they eventually crossed into north Africa in 429 and a decade later captured Carthage. From there they took to the seas and became a piratical menace in the western Mediterranean; but it was their occupation of the wealthy lands of north Africa which was critical, for this removed from imperial control the most important revenue-producing regions of the western empire. Again, civil war played a part in this sequence of events, for the Vandal crossing from Spain to north Africa took advantage of the conflict in the late 420s between the Roman commander in north Africa, Bonifatius, and Aëtius in Italy.¹⁶⁸

The longer the government in the west was deprived of the income (and recruits) from north Africa and significant parts of the Gaul, the greater the likelihood that its ability to sustain military capability would haemorrhage. The problems are reflected as early as the mid-440s in the preamble to a law of Valentinian III (expressed in the prolix language typical of late Roman legal pronouncements):

Nothing is so necessary as that the strength of a numerous army should be prepared for the exhausted circumstances and the afflicted condition of the State. But neither have we been able, through various kinds of expenditures to effect the arrangement of a matter so salutary, in which must be placed the foundations of full security for all, nor has any person been found who will regulate this matter by his own efforts. And thus by experience itself, neither for those who are bound by new oaths of military service, nor even for the veteran army can those supplies seem to suffice that are delivered with the greatest difficulty by the exhausted taxpayers, and it seems that from that source the supplies which are necessary for food and clothing cannot be furnished. Unless the soldiers should be supported by trading, which is unworthy and shameful for an armed man, they can scarcely be vindicated from the peril of hunger or from the destruction of cold. Wherefore, the mind of Our Serenity seethes as to the remedies that must be provided for these difficult times. For if we require these expenses from the landholder, in addition to the other things

¹⁶⁸ Whether or not Bonifatius actually invited the Vandals into north Africa, as some sources allege (Procop. *Wars* 3.3.25; Jord. *Get.* 167–9), remains uncertain; for differing views, see Jones (1964) 1106 n. 40; Whitby (2000b) 296.

which he furnishes, such an exaction of taxes would extinguish his last tenuous resources. On the other hand, if we should demand this from the merchants, they would be oppressed by the huge mass of so great a burden and would necessarily be overwhelmed.¹⁶⁹

A number of attempts were made to regain control of north Africa during the fifth century, but none succeeded. An eastern expedition dispatched in 441 was forced to return to the east from Sicily to meet a Hun invasion of the Balkans, an invasion fleet assembled by the western emperor Majorian in 461 was destroyed, and the mighty eastern expedition sent by Leo in 468 appears to have been undone by a combination of poor Roman coordination and clever Vandal diplomacy.

The critical importance of north Africa is highlighted by comparing the Empire's situation in the mid-third century. The decades of the 260s and 270s were another period of grave crisis for the Empire, when civil war was endemic and the empire was in serious danger of fragmenting permanently. A separatist 'Gallic empire' had been established in the west, while control of many eastern provinces (including Egypt) had also been lost by the central government to Palmyrene forces. The empire was gradually reunited through the endeavours of the succession of able 'soldier emperors' referred to earlier in this chapter, but it is surely also significant that at no point during those critical years were these men deprived of the resources of north Africa.

Also instructive is the position of the eastern half of the empire during the fifth and sixth centuries in relation to economic resources. There the wealthiest regions of the empire – Asia Minor and above all Egypt – did not suffer any direct significant enemy encroachments and remained firmly under imperial control. This was in part due to their geographical position which effectively protected them from serious inroads, as well as their not having any major military threat immediately adjacent (though it is worth noting that north Africa was in a similar position in this respect, yet did not escape major invasion). Military factors did therefore play an important part in the collapse of the west, even if not in the more obvious or direct ways which one might have anticipated.

The economic base of the eastern half of the empire, on the other hand, remained relatively unscathed by foreign invasion and occupation, at least until the seventh century.¹⁷⁰ Prudent financial management by Anastasius and his officials in the late fifth and early sixth century helped the east to recover from the financial strains of the mid-fifth century and created a buffer for the increased expenditure which followed from Justinian's

¹⁶⁹ Valentinian III, *Novel* ('New Law') 15, preface (trans. Pharr). Recruiting problems are reflected in other legislation from the same time: Valentinian III, *Novel* 6.

¹⁷⁰ Banaji (2001).

expansionist policies. Those policies, together with the impact of the great plague in the mid-sixth century, eventually placed renewed stresses on the financial health of the Empire and its ability to cope with conflict on three fronts at the same time – Persia, the lower Danube and Italy. Nevertheless, the empire weathered those pressures with reasonable success and was in a militarily stable position by the end of the century. It was only a sustained period of rebellions, usurpations and foreign invasions by Persians and Avars in the first three decades of the seventh century that brought the empire to the brink. It recovered even from this, only to prove unable to deal with the Arab invasions which followed hard on the heels of Heraclius' successes against the Persians. The Arab invasions, which resulted in the loss of Egypt, Palestine and Syria, were a devastating blow to the imperial economy and necessitated radical changes to the structure of the army and its financing.¹⁷¹ But the fact that it was only under such circumstances that this happened is testimony to the essential health of the army and its economic infrastructure prior to the seventh century.

¹⁷¹ Haldon (1990a) ch. 6.

CHAPTER 12

WAR AND SOCIETY

ANDREW FEAR

For inhabitants of the early Empire, the Roman army was a somewhat distant feature of society. Garrisoned in large fortresses whose barracks accommodated the vast majority of troops and often supplied by military workshops, the army would have seemed a world set apart. Its separation from the civilian world would have been emphasized all the more by the fact that most of these fortresses were stationed in frontier areas away from the main centres of population. Therefore for most of those living in the empire everyday contact with the army was minimal and a matter of choice, for while the *dilectus* or enforced levy was a legal possibility it was rarely used. Troops were volunteers and this lack of enforced recruitment suggests a high degree of satisfaction with a soldier's lot. Many veterans retired into respectability in various communities around the empire.

Oddly, this highly professional, and somewhat hermetically sealed, world was run by amateurs. Throughout Roman history arms and politics had been inextricably mixed; no ambitious Roman would wish to miss out on the possibility of military glory. Yet this glory was set very firmly into the context of a broader political career. Apart from the wobble of AD 68/9 which was resolved by the rapid emergence of the Flavian dynasty, Cicero's maxim of 'let arms yield to the toga' found its most perfect expression in the early Principate when the army was of no weight in political matters.¹ Before the death of Pertinax in AD 193 only Nero had met his death as the consequence of a military uprising.

The distant army was a matter of pride for those it protected; Tacitus, while excoriating the failings of various emperors, holds up as a contrast to them the great generals of the time – Corbulo, Suetonius Paulinus and, above all, Agricola. For Valerius Maximus the 'unrelaxing bond of military discipline' was the chief 'glory and mainstay' of the Roman Empire (Val. Max. 2.7. pr.).

By the late Empire all the circumstances listed above had changed radically. An inhabitant of early Roman Chester would have been amazed to revisit his home in the fourth century. The walls of the legionary fortress

¹ Cic. *Off.* 1.77, *cedant arma togae*.

were still in place, as was its administrative centre, but many of its barrack blocks had been demolished or allowed to fall into decay. As for the fortress's former occupant, the Twentieth Legion, its fate is unclear.² Nor was Chester an exception; in Britain Caerleon, 'the city of the Legion', also seems to have lost its barracks. On the continent a similar process of shrinking occurred on the Danubian frontier, where we see both the legionary fortress at Carnuntum and the fort at Eining dwindle in size. Even forts retained at full size seem to have had a much-reduced garrison. But neither the semi-abandonment of bases such as Chester nor the disappearance of the units traditionally associated with them meant that the army was in numerical decline. Rather they indicated a change of fashion from the deployment of large and concentrated formations to the use of a larger number of individually smaller and more dispersed units.³

Overall the army may have grown in size. The polemical Christian writer Lactantius implies that under Diocletian its numbers increased fourfold and while this statement, made to vilify the emperor, is not to be taken at face value, other sources with less of an axe to grind do imply an increase of at least 33 per cent in the number of those serving with the colours.⁴ But while growing in numbers the legions shrank in individual size – the post-Diocletianic legions numbered around 1,100 men – and were housed in smaller forts. El Lejjun built for *legio IV Martia* in Jordan was only eleven acres as compared with Caerleon's fifty and Chester's fifty-six.⁵

The world too had become a much more violent place. Wars were no longer confined to Rome's frontiers, since construction of defences deep in the interior reflected the ability of its enemies to make deep incursions into imperial territory. Julian (*Ep. ad Ath.* 279a), albeit in special circumstances, claimed in AD 355 that the Gallic frontier was in danger of raids for a depth of a hundred miles. This, along with the various breakaway movements within the empire itself, meant that the danger of war and actual conflict was present throughout the empire rather than merely at its edges. The result of these changes was to give the army a much more perceptible presence in the civilian world. There were many more forts, a large number of them now in areas of high population. Moreover the style of these forts was different from the larger bases which had gone before: they possessed much more substantial curtain walls which were thicker and higher than those previously found and incorporated tall projecting towers. On

² Hoffmann (2002); Mason (2001) ch. 13.

³ For a discussion of army reorganisation see Nicasie (1998) ch. 2; cf. pp. 284–6 above.

⁴ Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 7. See, however, the discussion by Elton, ch. 8 in this volume; also Tomlin (2000).

⁵ Tomlin (2000).

occasions the army physically intruded into the civilian world. At Amiens one quarter of the walled town in the late Roman period consisted of a military arsenal and administration block, and the area destroyed to create this complex included the old forum, marketplace and amphitheatre of the earlier town.⁶ Psychologically these developments would not have been likely to reassure the civilian population. The old establishments had been bases from which the army had sallied forth to fight; the new forts were built for defence and, however powerful they looked, they were an admission that the Roman army could no longer be guaranteed to take the initiative in war.

But public opinion had not moved with the times and there was still an expectation that wars would be fought on the frontiers; the emperor Valens, for example, was abused when he arrived at Constantinople prior to the battle of Adrianople on the grounds that he had deliberately and selfishly led the enemy into Roman territory. Valens left the city in anger threatening to use the army against it on his return. That return never happened, but the incident illustrates the growing rift between soldier and civilian (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 4.38). The protests at Constantinople can be understood when it is realized that the more mobile units of the army, 'the field army', often lacked permanent bases and hence required billets in towns (discussed below) and such permanent barracks as there were lay close to major population centres. This meant that the army came into closer, and much more unhappy, contact with civilians than in the past. This contact was certainly noticed by the pagan historian Zosimus who attacked Constantine for his policy, as he saw it, of removing troops from the frontier and stationing them in cities, something which he believed was detrimental to both parties: '[he] subjected the cities . . . to the outrages of the soldiers so that from that time on most of them have become deserted. In addition to this he weakened the troops by letting them give themselves over to shows and luxuries' (Zos. 2.34). Zosimus, like Lactantius, had a religious axe to grind and his statement is at least partially self-contradictory. Nevertheless the sentiments he expressed struck a chord among many of his contemporaries. Libanius complains bitterly of soldiers' behaviour in Antioch, accusing them of brawling and armed extortion, going on to note that their camp-followers were no better (*Lib. Or.* 47.13–14).

In the realm of high politics the relationship between soldier and civilian had also changed greatly. The army now enjoyed an independent power that it had not possessed since the days of the late Republic: different armies became king-makers and civilians were powerless to stop them. Cicero's nightmare vision of 'the law silenced by arms' (*Cic. Mil.* 4.11) had finally become a reality. Stability was restored in the fourth century, but

⁶ Bayard and Massy (1983) ch. 9.

the world of politics had changed forever. There was now a firm divide which had not existed before between the military and civilian worlds. This fracture in the Roman power structure is illustrated by the careers of Libanius' pupils. In the early Empire all of these young aristocrats would have had military appointments during their lives, but the new 'two-career' system meant that very few of them served with the army. While this divide was welcomed by military men such as Ammianus Marcellinus, who praises Constantius II for keeping the sets of positions apart (Amm. Marc. 21.16.2), the senatorial class were much less happy with the change, which substantially weakened their grip on power.⁷ The venom poured out on Gallienus by the aristocratic fourth-century author Aurelius Victor and his contemporary anonymous colleague, the author of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, accurately reflects this senatorial dislike of the new state of affairs.⁸ Its cause was clear: the army had now entered the political arena as a constant, serious and independent player which could overrule civilian politics in a way that had not been true since the end of the Republic over two hundred years previously. John Lydus' view that Constantine dispersed the former Danubian garrisons of the army over Asia Minor because he was afraid of usurpers may be false, but points to a late Roman view of an army which was politically powerful and only loyal on sufferance to those in power.⁹

The Roman state in the fourth century had become in most respects a para-military one. Work in the civil service was now described as 'militia', a word previously reserved for military service; civil servants were called soldiers (e.g. Lib. *Ep.* 301.8 21), used military terminology, and their badge of office was the *cingulum* or military belt. The depth of the penetration of military jargon and the style of thinking which went with it can be seen by the way that Jerome uses the verb *accingere* – to put on the military belt – to describe his appointment as secretary to pope Damasus.

Yet this militarization of society came with a general loss in esteem for the army. By its very nature and composition no army is likely to behave as if it were composed of angels and there is plenty of evidence of military brutality and abuse of civilians from the early Empire. The New Testament is a good source for such behaviour, giving as it does a 'bottom-up' view of Roman rule, and here we see the abuse of *vehiculatio*, compulsory transport requisitions, and a view of the world where extortion is almost expected of soldiers (Matt. 5.41; Luke 3.14). It is likely therefore that the soldier caught going into the ladies' baths in Daphne near Antioch in Alexander Severus' reign and 'indulging in things forbidden to soldiers' had plenty of errant

⁷ See the protests of Symmachus, *Or.* 1.23.

⁸ Bird (1984).

⁹ John Lydus, *Mag.* 3.31. For a detailed account of the development of politics in this period, see ch. 11 in this volume.

colleagues in earlier times (*SHA Alex. Sev.* 53). What had changed was that the soldier's arrest in this case provoked a mutiny, showing a relaxation in discipline and an assumption among the soldiery that such behaviour would go unpunished.¹⁰ Incidents of this kind were bound to increase given the new proximity of the army to civilians. A vital insight into interaction between soldier and civilian comes from an archive of letters belonging to Abinnaeus, commander of the fort at Dionysias (modern Qasr Qarun) in Egypt in the mid-fourth century. It contains a variety of complaints about his men's behaviour. A Demetrius writes to protest to Abinnaeus that one of them, Athenodorus, is making village life unbearable (*P Abinn.* 28), while Aurelius Aboul of Hermopolis complains that another, Paul, had with a variety of accomplices stolen some of his pigs and shorn eleven of his sheep (*P Abinn.* 48). An earlier papyrus from the mid-third century shows that such abuses were not a new development: in it an octogenarian Serapion from Philadelphia protests that when he asked a soldier called Julius whether he had in his possession a sow which belonged to his daughter, he was beaten up by Julius for his pains (*P Graux* 4, dating to AD 248). But such violence was not all one way: Luppicianus complains that the son of Serapion, one of Abinnaeus' troops had been beaten up 'with clubs and swords' by villagers in Philagris (*P Abinn.* 12). Such incidents may all be simply typical records of everyday village life, but they also hint at an underlying tension between soldier and civilian.

It is likely that there was a general lowering of military discipline in the late period. While bitter, moralizing comments on the poor state of the army are to be expected from sources such as Vegetius (*Mil.* 1.20), even enthusiasts for the army such as Ammianus Marcellinus lament the fickle behaviour of the troops and complain that their *intemperantia* has often been harmful to the state (Amm. Marc. 26.1.6, 29.5.6). He comments that Constantius' soldiers were 'rapacious towards civilians, but cowards in the face of the enemy' and that discipline among them was lax (Amm. Marc. 22.4.7, 22.4.6). After launching his coup Julian pleaded with his troops not to molest the civilian population of Gaul, but their later behaviour in Antioch was appalling (Amm. Marc. 21.5.8, 22.12.6). Even when we take into account the Roman tendency to look to the past with nostalgia, it is significant that unlike earlier authors such as Tacitus, late authors, rather than seeing the army as a glowing alternative to the politics of the day, are interested in reasons for its decline. John Chrysostom's view that soldiers were not watchdogs of their flock, but rather wolves that preyed on it would have seemed as incredible to an audience of the first century AD, as it seemed

¹⁰ On the other hand, Alexander Severus was perceived as a weak commander and this may have encouraged the troops to be more truculent than normal.

all too plausible to his contemporaries such as Themistius who also uses this imagery.¹¹

To this problem could be added another one, that of military success – or rather the lack of it. The army of the Principate may have been brutal, but it was seen to be effective. Rome's enemies were regularly defeated and held at bay beyond the empire's boundaries. This was no longer the case in the later Empire when it was by no means guaranteed that the army would be triumphant. The population were therefore confronted with evidence of greater military failure, but at the same time increased expenditure on an army which seemed to fail to produce the goods. In the early sixth century a Roman spy ingratiating himself with the Persian commander of Amida, echoing Ammianus' earlier complaint, refers to the Roman army as 'robbers who have since time immemorial feared the Persians and done violence to farmers', underlining this perceived double failing of the army.¹²

The new deployment of the army led to its intrusion on civilian space. Forts had always had a *territorium*, but as they were in the main in sparsely populated areas this caused little friction. This now changed, which made clashes inevitable. In AD 384 Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius legislated against soldiers trespassing on private land. There was also a tendency to graze animals belonging to the army on municipal land and the land of private landowners. Estates at Antioch are said to have been 'devastated' by such behaviour by Arcadius, and Honorius in a decree of AD 398 banned the practice; but enforcing a ban against armed men proved difficult and seventeen years later Honorius and Theodosius II were forced to reissue the prohibition against this 'ruinous practice'.¹³ Legislation was also produced in an attempt to force soldiers not to pollute rivers or to offend public sensibilities by bathing naked in them.¹⁴

Civilian relations with the army also changed on a much more personal level in that now civilians could be, and were, forcibly incorporated into the army. The heavy use of conscription marks a sharp departure from earlier practice. Some volunteers did still come forward; one was the future emperor Marcian (Evagrius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.1), but in contrast to the early empire there were nowhere near enough. One explanation sometimes put

¹¹ Joh. Chrys. *Hom. in Mat.* 61.2–3; Them. *Or.* 8.117. On discipline in general see Jones (1964); Rémondon (1955). For a more positive view see Williams and Friell (1994) ch. 6, and cf. pp. 414–16 above. The speeches given by Procopius to Belisarius and the Persian commander Firuz before the battle of Daras in 530 both presuppose ill-discipline on the Roman side: *Wars* I.14.13–20, 21–7.

¹² Procop. *Wars* 1.9.7. See also the comments of the *comes largitionum*, Ursulus, at Amida in AD 360, Amm. Marc. 20.11.5 – comments for which he was to pay with his life (Amm. Marc. 22.3.7–8).

¹³ The reissuing of imperial decrees opens the question of whether this showed a failure to comply with the original decree or whether it was done as a mere ideological gesture. Given the disturbed nature of the period, the former seems a more sensible interpretation unless the latter can be clearly demonstrated. However, for a strong view to the contrary, see Harries (1998) 82–8. See also Whitby (2004) 169–71.

¹⁴ Estates, *Cod. Theod.* 7.1.12; pastures, *Cod. Theod.* 7.7.3 and 7.7.5; rivers, *Cod. Theod.* 7.1.13.

forward to explain this phenomenon is that the expanded size of the army led to demand outstripping the supply of volunteers. The size of the late Roman army is unclear; estimates range from 380,000 to 650,000.¹⁵ If we take a high estimate of 550,000 men, it would require around 24,000 recruits each year, 10,000 for the field army and 14,000 for the frontier forces, to keep the army up to strength.¹⁶ Even on a low estimate of the total imperial population at around some 21 million in this period,¹⁷ this demand for manpower, while not insignificant (it perhaps represents some 1.5–2 per cent of the eligible male population), would not have been an intolerable burden on the population and it is thus difficult to see such a shortfall as the reason for the change. More likely solutions are to be found in the declining status and conditions of the troops (pay may have dropped by as much as 80 per cent in real terms)¹⁸ and the fact that service was now much more likely to involve serious and prolonged periods of fighting for which there was by no means certain a successful outcome, as opposed to minor policing expeditions of the earlier period. Not only were troops being asked to live in worse conditions, they also had to face on a regular basis the possibility of violent death. Neither factor would have been an aid to recruitment.¹⁹

Officialdom's solution to this problem was threefold. First, soldiers became a legally entrenched caste as the sons of soldiers and veterans were forced to serve with the colours; second, general conscription became an annual event; and third, troops were recruited from outside the empire.

Veterans' sons were given a slightly higher rank on enlistment than other recruits (*Cod. Theod.* 7.1.5 dating to AD 364), but nevertheless there was resistance to their enforced enrolment, and within six months of the above privilege being granted a further law threatening veterans who were not complying with the regulations had to be passed. These threats were repeated by Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius in AD 380 (*Cod. Theod.* 7.1.8, 7.22.9). A few years earlier another decree by the same three emperors had attempted to close the excuse of physical weakness by stating that such veterans' sons who would not qualify for the field army could be enlisted into the frontier troops (*Cod. Theod.* 7.22.8, dating to AD 372). Another temporary form of persuasion used by Constantine was to offer compulsory enrolment in the local town council, something which would have involved considerable expense, as the only alternative to military

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Treadgold (1995) ch. 2 and cf. pp. 284–6 above.

¹⁶ See Nicasie (1998) 83 n. 1.

¹⁷ McEvday and Jones (1978) 21–2; but see also the comments of Treadgold (1995) 160–4.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the effects of inflation on soldiers' pay see Duncan-Jones (1978) 549–51. For the latter part of the period under discussion see Haldon (1999) 121 and n. 47.

¹⁹ For a negative view of the late Roman army see Southern and Dixon (1996) ch. 9. See, however, Elton (1996b); Whitby (2004), (2005) for a more positive picture.

service. This provision carefully encompassed those who had been mutilated, no doubt as a deterrent to the practice (*Cod. Theod.* 7.22.1, dating to AD 319). Nevertheless this seems to have been a gambit which failed: Constantine was forced to reiterate these provisions in 326 and in 332 (*Cod. Theod.* 7.2.2, 7.22.4) and later enactments provide for no alternatives to military service at all. Instead, we are confronted with a sequence of laws which enact that veterans' sons who try to evade service by enrolling in civilian imperial offices be forcibly recruited into the army or, in the case of those who have succeeded in draft-dodging into their old age, be given a compulsory place on the town council (*Cod. Theod.* 7.22.7, dating to AD 365). Constantine's failure and the legislation which followed highlights the reluctance to serve among a population which had during the early Empire traditionally been a secure recruiting ground for the army, providing the most important source of troops in the early third century;²⁰ it is thus telling evidence for the increasing unpopularity of military service.

Apart from veterans' sons, conscription from the free-born community now became a regular fact of life. Conscription appears to have been introduced by Diocletian, though some would place its inception in the 370s, and levies were held annually. The age of liability for conscription appears to have been 18.²¹ The levy was not organized centrally, but made the responsibility of local authorities who were obliged to provide a set number of recruits for the state using a mixture of persuasion and coercion to do so.²² These recruits would then be brought before the provincial governor for approval. On occasions it appears that military commanders could recommend that men be recruited. It is unclear whether such recommendations were made with or without the consent of those involved.²³ Cities were charged individually with finding recruits, large landowners had their contributions assessed individually, while smaller ones were grouped together into assessment units known as *capitula* (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.7). The burden of conscription hence fell squarely on the rural population who by a happy coincidence were also regarded as providing the best soldiering stock.²⁴ At times recruitment officers would descend on villages in the manner of the press-gangs of eighteenth-century England to extract recruits. The Abinæus archive contains a letter of complaint from Chaeremon, the president

²⁰ See Mann (1983) 65.

²¹ Amm. Marc. 31.4; for conscription's inception in the 370s, see Zuckerman (1998), *contra* Whitby (2004) 70–3; ages: Constantine, twenty to twenty-five years old, *Cod. Theod.* 7.22.2, Constantius II, sixteen years old, *Cod. Theod.* 7.22.4, thereafter eighteen years old, *Cod. Theod.* 7.13.1. For a different view, see pp. 297–300 above.

²² See Brunt (1990a).

²³ Involvement of the provincial governor, *Cod. Theod.* 7.13.1, *Acta Maximiliani* 1; letters of recommendation, Rea (1984).

²⁴ For an expression of this common prejudice see Veg. *Mil.* 1.3, a tradition which stretches back to the Elder Cato (*Agr. Orig. praef.* 4).

of the council at Arsinoe, to Abinnaeus about military violence in the village of Theoxenis which is likely to have been caused by the arrival of such a press-gang. Another letter to Abinnaeus, this time from a civilian in charge of such a gang, Paesius, ruefully reports that he has failed to drag away even a single individual during his three-day stay at Karanis. After his failure Paesius had the village surrounded and its inhabitants finally paid 2 *solidi* and 50 pounds of silver in lieu of providing recruits. Such incidents must have been common in the late Empire.²⁵

There was frequent pleading for exemption from service on the grounds that the prospective recruit did not meet the minimum standards for army life. One papyrus still extant pleads that a finger infection will make it impossible for the plaintiff to serve in the army. The plea's pretext is carefully tailored for military considerations as it implies that the sufferer would be unable to hold a weapon. Such forms of pleading were not new – Polybius records similar behaviour in the second century BC – but their frequency had increased dramatically.²⁶ This reluctance to serve is seen even more graphically in a growing willingness, reflected in an increased amount of legislation on this issue, to indulge in self-mutilation or the mutilation of sons to avoid service. Again, the most common form of this practice took the form of amputating fingers in order to make holding weapons impossible.²⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus uses the fact that the Gauls did not indulge in this practice as evidence of that race's warlike disposition; that he does so suggests that the practice was current elsewhere (Amm. Marc. 15.12.3). In 367 Valentinian and Valens decreed that mutilated individuals would not be exempted from service, but forced to serve in some capacity (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.4). This appears to have proved a failure as a deterrent as a later decree by the same emperors enacted that a self-mutilator be burned alive along with his master if he had colluded in his disfigurement (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.5). These draconian laws against mutilation were clearly unenforceable as in 381 Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius, no doubt helped by the shortage of manpower caused by the disaster at Adrianople, decided that supplying two mutilated recruits would be the equivalent of producing one whole-bodied recruit and that self-mutilators should be specially tattooed to mark out their shame (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.10). The hint in these laws at the potential involvement of recruits' civilian masters (*domini*) in the practice of mutilation raises the question of exactly who wished to avoid military service.²⁸ In the above law we can perhaps see the lengths to which landowners would go in order to retain good workers, possibly with,

²⁵ *P Abinn.* 18, 35. For objections to this interpretation, see Zuckerman (1998) 81–6.

²⁶ Finger infection, *P Herm.* 7; Polyb. 35.4.

²⁷ Again the practice is attested, but as a rarity, in the reigns of Augustus (Suet. *Aug.* 24.1) and Trajan (*Digest* 49.16.4.12).

²⁸ Earlier commentators, e.g. Liebeschuetz (1990) 20, took the view that service was unpopular; for doubts, however, see Nicasie (1998) 93; Whitby (1995), (2004).

or possibly without, those workers' collusion. Landowners appear to have been able to choose which of their labourers they despatched to the army and would naturally have wished to send away the weakest workers while keeping the better ones for themselves. Vegetius notes this practice with disgust, remarking that landowners would turn over only men that they did not want on their estates in the first place (*Veg. Mil.* 1.7). Another common trick for landowners was to substitute slaves for the free born in the levy. Slaves were normally ineligible for service, as were various other disreputable kinds of workers, for example cooks and breadmakers (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.8). But exceptions could be made: during the Radagaisus' invasion of Italy in AD 406 slaves were offered their freedom if they would join up (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.16).

A monetary escape route from the levy was provided whereby cash could be accepted in lieu of recruits. This was known as the *aurum tironicum* and appears in the first instance to have proved highly lucrative for recruiting officers as landowners were willing to pay over the odds to keep their best workers (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.2, 7.13.7.1). Ammianus Marcellinus notes the popularity of paying the *aurum tironicum* with dismay, alleging that it was a major contribution to Rome's military decline (*Amm. Marc.* 14.11.7). The emperor Valens regularized a recruit's value at 30 *solidi* plus a further 6 *solidi* for his equipment, remarking that prior to his regulations 'outrageous prices had been demanded' in lieu of recruits (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.7).²⁹

After the Christianization of the Empire another potential escape route from serving in the army was the Church. The most famous veteran's son who was conscripted was St Martin of Tours. Sulpicius Severus tells us that Martin wished for religious life from his youth and that his father willingly enrolled him as a way to purge his son of Christianity; however, his attitude seems to have run against the current of contemporary opinion (Sulpicius Severus, *Vit. Mart.* 2). Steps were taken to plug this drain on resources. According to the hostile Trinitarian tradition, the emperor Valens forcibly conscripted monks in the Egyptian desert because they were opposed to Arianism, but he may simply have been rounding up men who were evading military service. This problem certainly persisted: Arcadius and Honorius noted that 'many men either just before their military service or when it has just begun are hiding under the pretext of religious devotion . . . they are drawn not so much by devotion to their faith as by their love of sloth and idleness. We allow no one whatsoever to be so exempted'.³⁰

The unpopularity of conscription, at least for those subjected to it rather than their masters, was centred on the way it detached the levies from their communities, although in the case of *limitanei* this was less and less the

²⁹ Discussion in Zuckerman (1998).

³⁰ Valens: Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 1.41; Arcadius and Honorius: *Cod. Theod.* 7.20.11.2; cf. also pp. 340–1 above.

case as the period went on. A third-century papyrus from Oxyrhynchus (*P Oxy.* 1666) talks of a Pausanias being able to get his son out of the legion he had enlisted in and transferred to a cavalry squadron based at Coptus. We are not told why Pausanias' son wished to transfer, but the reason is likely to have been that a legionary posting would have taken him far from home, whereas being stationed with the squadron would keep him much nearer to his family. Pausanias says that he used 'many means' to effect the transfer which we must assume is a euphemism for bribery. The strength of feeling about being posted away from home can be gauged from Ammianus Marcellinus who tells us that one of the reasons Julian's army mutinied against Constantius II was their fear that Constantius intended to transfer them to the east away from their homeland.³¹ A more personal illustration of the same point is provided by an anonymous letter from the Abinnaeus archive pleading with Abinnaeus to release the writer's brother-in-law from military service although he was a veteran's son on the grounds that his widowed mother was dependent on him. Aware that he is unlikely to succeed in his plea, given that he is urging Abinnaeus to break the law, his correspondent adds a second, lesser request – if his wife's brother does have to serve, Abinnaeus might at least ensure that this would not be with the field army (*P Abinn.* 19). Conscription to the field army would involve major dislocation of the recruit's life as he would be removed from his own region and, as the field army had no fixed abode, be subsequently rootless until he was discharged. Such a posting would probably destroy the recruit's family life. Occasionally women elected to follow their husbands; the wife of John, St Saba's father, went with him from Cappadocia where he was conscripted to his posting in Alexandria in Egypt, but the price was to leave the young Saba behind.³² More often however it appears that the conscript's wife did not, or could not, go with her husband. This problem may be reflected in a posthumous law of Constantine allowing a woman to remarry if she had heard nothing from her absent husband in the army for four or more years, providing that she notified her husband's commander (*Cod. Iust.* 5.17.7); the law both recognizes the problem and then makes it virtually impossible for the woman to do anything about her state. A decree of Constantius in AD 349 allowing families to be sent to some troops is in this respect an exception which proves the rule and may be a grant to troops recruited outside the empire (*Cod. Theod.* 7.1.3).

Travel within provinces did occur. In a papyrus dating from AD 293 sent by a soldier, Paniscus, from Coptus in upper Egypt to his wife Plutogenia in Philadelphia in the Fayyum (*P Mich.* III 214), Paniscus urges Plutogenia to get ready to come to Coptus and asks her to bring a variety of supplies.

³¹ Amm. Marc. 20.4.10 – Julian is said to have found this fear *rationabilis*.

³² Cyr. Scyth., *Vita Sabae* 1.

These include his new shield, implying that there were at least two in the family home, his helmet, javelins and tent fittings. Paniscus envisages the move as permanent, as he also tells his wife to bring all their clothes and her gold jewellery (though he advises her not to wear the latter on the boat trip). The protests that Plutogenia's sister lives near Coptus shows that Paniscus thought there would be some resistance on her part to moving and, alas, we do not know the end of the story. Plutogenia's move is awkward, but possible. It is likely that moves further afield would have simply been impossible.

A conscripted army is much more liable to desertion than a voluntary force, and this was certainly the case with the later Roman army at every point in a soldier's career. Desertion began as soon as the conscripts were led away to join the army (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.9.1); in the *Life of Pachomius* we read of how recruits marched off to join the field army were held under lock and key at night to prevent desertion. A circular letter sent from the count of the east to the *riparii* on the route from the Thebaid to Antioch in the 380s warns them to take precautions to ensure that none of the new recruits from Egypt deserts. The penalty for lack of vigilance is to recapture the deserters or provide new men in their place and to suffer punishment for a dereliction of duty (*W Chrest* 469).

On enrolment recruits were immediately tattooed, something previously done only to slaves and criminals. Vegetius is unhappy about this, but fails to see the reason behind it – namely an attempt to ensure that deserters were easily recognized.³³ Desertion appears in fact to have been common: the extent of the problem is perhaps revealed by Gratian and Theodosius' decision in 380 to pardon deserters who returned to the colours (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.4.3). In the Abinnaeus archive we have evidence not of desertion, but of something which could and no doubt did turn into it – unauthorized absence without leave. Caor, the village priest, asks Abinnaeus to forgive one of his soldiers, Paul, precisely for this offence (*P Abinn.* 32), though in fact Abinnaeus would have been forbidden to grant even authorized leave – something which may in itself have aggravated the problem of desertion (*Cod. Theod.* 7.12.1). There was an attempt to force officers to live up to this law as each soldier on leave could cost the officers concerned a fine of five pounds of gold (*Cod. Theod.* 7.1.2), but the law seems to have been honoured more in the breach than the observance: the Abinnaeus archive contains two further letters which are requests for leave, one from Clematius who asks that a kinsman of his, Ision, be given leave, and one from a mother who asks that her conscripted son, Heron, be given leave for a few days as she is dependent on him (*P Abinn.* 33, 34). Unfortunately we

³³ Tattooing, Veg. *Mil.* 1.8, 2.5; its purpose, *Cod. Theod.* 10.22.4; Zuckerman (1998).

do not have Abinnaeus' replies, but the tone of the letters suggests that his correspondents did not think what they were asking for was exceptional.

Desertion could be a lucrative business and it would be surprising if an underworld industry to aid deserters did not grow up, paralleling that which aided runaway slaves. Forged documents were a common way of trying to plead honourable discharge when caught, and judges are warned to be careful about this by an edict of Arcadius and Honorius in AD 403 (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.11). No doubt their manufacture provided gainful employment for some. The wide variety of those involved in this shadowy world is shown by an earlier law of Valentinian and Valens of AD 365 which provides for low-class harbourers of deserters to be condemned to the mines, while high-class harbourers were to be fined half their property (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.1).

This second category of harbourer points to a less than selfless form of help. Some landowners were certainly not adverse to lending a hand to deserters who could provide them with a source of cheap and easily exploited labour such as illegal immigrants furnish today. It is moreover clear that on occasions landowners took an active part in seducing troops into deserting in order to have enough labour for their estates.³⁴ Quite apart from providing their own labour, deserters gave landowners another useful ploy which can be identified by laws attempting to prohibit it – namely the recycling of deserters into the army as part of a required levy, thus preserving the better elements of the farm workforce (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.6.1).

Again the extent of these problems is perhaps shown by the increasing severity of the laws dealing with punishments for the harbouring of deserters. Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius provided in AD 379 for the burning alive of farm overseers (*actores*) who harboured deserters as well as the confiscation of the estate where the deserter was found (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.2). All provincials were empowered to seize deserters (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.4, 7.18.13) and rewards for revealing their whereabouts were great, including a grant of freedom for any slave informants (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.4). Those on whom the original levy had been placed were required to pay for each of their recruits who deserted within a year: as a law of 382 dryly put it, 'those constrained by this duty ought to have the foresight to provide as necessary reinforcements for the army men who will fight, not those who will desert' (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.6). Not all deserters acted on individual initiative, however, and some seem to have either deserted *en masse* or coalesced after deserting into gangs of brigands. These provoked a special, but rather lame, decree of Arcadius

³⁴ *Cod. Theod.* 7.14.1. Landowners were not the only potential seducers; gladiatorial impresarios were also known to lure men from the colours, and some actively offered themselves as gladiators, *Cod. Theod.* 15.12.2.

and Honorius to Longinianus the praetorian prefect in AD 406 which stated that such individuals would not escape justice.³⁵

The state did not merely rely on legal deterrents and informers to hunt down deserters. High-ranking staff officers (*protectores*) were detached especially for this purpose (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.10). As they were forbidden to cause damage to landholders in the execution of their duty, it is likely that such damage was not an infrequent occurrence; indeed given the collusion of landowners in desertion, positive pleasure was no doubt taken in causing damage in the course of such operations. This probably involved the destruction of or violent entry into potential hiding places. In 412 the tribunes detailed to seek out deserters in Africa were abolished because, according to the decree, they were in the words of the edict ending their existence 'devastating the province' (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.17). Despite all of this, the problem did not go away and in the end the western Empire was broken down by its gravity. Between 396 and 412 Honorius issued no fewer than nine edicts on desertion and punishments to be meted out to their harbourers. The following year he and Theodosius II essentially gave up and enacted that if an individual abandoned his post and lived at home or anywhere else he was to lose status among those waiting to be promoted. The edict gives details of loss of status for those who have gone absent without leave for up to three years. It is only in the fourth year that they are to be struck off and regarded as deserters. The length of the period of absence envisaged here and the implication that many of those who had gone absent without leave were easy to locate shows that the state had finally surrendered in its attempt to stop the problem and now sought to reach an accommodation with it (*Cod. Theod.* 7.18.16).

Press-gangs and soldiers seeking out deserters were not the only form of military imposition civilians suffered. The field army had no permanent home and was therefore billeted on towns. Unsurprisingly this was extremely unpopular: on occasions owners would barricade their houses in an attempt to prevent soldiers entering to find quarters (*Life of Pachomius* ch. 102). Although Libanius in his *Antiochus* (*Or.* 11) speaks of the Antiochenes being glad to have troops billeted on them prior to Constantius' Persian campaign, this is special pleading on his part and given the lie by the rest of his pronouncements on the army which are uniformly hostile (*Lib. Or.* 11.178). Various groups obtained exemptions from having to provide billets; these included, inevitably, senators, but also school-masters, orators, doctors, and philosophers.³⁶ Such was the dislike of the system that the *Jerusalem Talmud*, compiled around AD 500, allows the faithful to

³⁵ Mass desertion: *Digest* 49.16.3.9 (Modestinus); brigands: *Digest* 49.16.5.8 (Menander); imperial decree, *Cod. Theod.* 7.18.15.

³⁶ *Cod. Theod.* 7.8.1; *Digest* 50.4.18.30 (Arcadius Charisius).

resort to bribery to avoid having to provide a billet (y. Bava Qamma iii 3c). Around half a century later it was the introduction of billeting on the philo-Roman Lazi of Colchis and the appearance of its attendant abuses which was enough make the tribe switch their allegiance to Persia. The same effect was produced on another philo-Roman people, the Abasgi.³⁷

The victims of the system were forced to surrender one-third of their house to the billeted soldier. Which part of the house fell to whom was a contentious issue – Arcadius and Honorius enacted that the house be divided into thirds, that the owner be given choice of the first third, the soldier the second, with the remaining third also falling to the owner (*Cod. Theod.* 7.8.5). The soldier's third had to include stabling or this had to be provided as an extra. Technically only the rooms had to be provided, but it is clear that this was often the thin end of the wedge (*Cod. Theod.* 7.8.12). Food was commonly demanded and owners were often used as personal servants – Ammianus Marcellinus records that Julian's troops forced their billet-owners in Antioch to carry them home at night (Amm. Marc. 22.12.6). A letter allegedly written by the emperor Aurelian on how to keep order in the ranks gives a good impression of the forms of abuses that were common:

Let no one steal another man's chicken or lay hands on his sheep. Let no-one steal grapes or appropriate another's corn. Let no one extort oil, salt, timber, and let each man be content with his allowance . . . Let them behave correctly in their billets and let any one who starts a fight be flogged.

(*SHA Aur.* 7)

The village of Scaptopara in Thrace was particularly unlucky as it lay between two army camps and was the site of a locally renowned festival. In their petition to Gordian III dating to AD 238 the villagers describe how troops demanded not merely billets, but also 'many other things' for which they did not pay. They also allege that troops on the march would divert from their proper route in order to exploit Scaptopara (*CIL* III. 12336). Such things could be and were legislated against. This was done by Constantine II and Constans in 340, but the continuing sequence of legislation in 342, 393 and 416 shows that the problem was never resolved.³⁸ For civilians the opening lines of Constantine and Constans' decree, 'If any person of his own free will wants to help the man he has received into his home by supplying him with such necessities as oil, wood, and other things of this kind, let him know that this privilege is granted to him', must have seemed bitterly ironic. At the heart of the letter from Scaptopara is the crux of the problem:

³⁷ Procop. *Wars* 2.5.6, 12, 8.16.1. The Lazi, however, found that they had jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire, 2.28.25–6. The Abasgi, Procop. *Wars* 8.8.10.

³⁸ *Cod. Theod.* 7.9.1, 7.9.2, 7.9.3, 7.9.4; cf. n. 13 above for different views of repeated legislation.

For a time the decrees of the governors prevailed and no-one troubled us with demands for hospitality or supplies, but after some time had gone by, that whole crowd who despise us because we are defenceless imposed themselves on us again.

Similar complaints are made by the imperial tenants of Aragua in Phrygia in a document dating to the 240s. Two hundred and fifty years later Pseudo-Joshua Stylites offers a lurid account of billeting in Edessa in AD 503–5 on the same lines. His account also shows that corruption would allow the rich to escape from billeting at the expense of the poor. When justice is finally done and the wealthier citizens are forced to provide billets, the account ends on a highly suggestive note – the rich ask the local *dux* to stipulate precisely what must be handed over to the troops to prevent them ‘looting the houses of the wealthy when they enter them just as they looted the poor’ (Ps.-Joshua Stylites 93).

Sexual excesses also took place. Simple adultery no doubt was not uncommon. Soldiers used both their status and their mobility as an attempt to avoid its consequences. A law of 383 dealt with both problems by providing that being a soldier was no excuse for adultery and that the case should be heard in the home town of the plaintiff (*Cod. Theod.* 9.7.9). The fourth-century author of *SHA* marks out the emperor Aurelian as a martinet for his practice, when tribune of *legio VI Gallicana*, of punishing troops for adultery committed with the wives of those upon whom they were billeted. According to the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, offenders were ripped apart by having each of their legs tied to separate bent-down saplings which were then released to spring upright. It would be naive to assume that the *adulteria* which was being punished here was simply that of women being seduced by the glamour of a uniform and did not include rape (*SHA Aur.* 7). The author notes that Aurelian was the only commander to behave in this fashion, which probably bodes ill for the time in which he himself was writing. On a related matter we have the bizarre Syriac story of *Euphemia and the Goth* from late fourth-century Antioch. In this tale Euphemia, a widow’s daughter, marries a Gothic soldier in Edessa and is taken back by her husband to his own country. Here she finds that she is a victim of bigamy and is forcibly enslaved until the martyrs of Edessa miraculously save her.³⁹ It is hard to determine the truth of this particular tale, but at all events it must be portraying a set of circumstances that seemed plausible to its audience. It was not always the case that the civilians were the victims of soldiers when billeting happened. One court case from Egypt has the plaintiff pleading that her husband stole from the soldier billeted with them and then fled leaving her to face the music (*P Oxy.* L3581). No doubt

³⁹ See Burkitt (1913, repr. 1981).

there were other such incidents too, but there can be little doubt that the extortioner's boot was mainly on the military foot.

Billeting was a temporary misfortune for some cities, but a permanent feature of life for others.⁴⁰ The result was a *de facto* divide of the town into military and civilian sectors. At Hermopolis the military area was known as the citadel (*phrourion*) as opposed to the civilian *polis*, and at Oxyrhynchus the military zone was known as the *campus*. Our best evidence, however, comes not from Egypt, but Dura-Europus in Syria. Here the troops were stationed in a special quarter of the city separated from the rest of the town by a 5-foot-high wall. In this area houses were simply altered in accordance with the troops' tastes, the temple of the local god Azzanathkona was modified to accommodate army offices (in a similar way the temple of Allat in Palmyra was subsumed into the army's headquarters building there), and another house used to quarter prostitutes and theatrical entertainers paid for by the army. In general the picture is one of two separate worlds. One was no doubt sullenly resentful of the other, but permanent billeting of this sort probably allowed a *modus vivendi* to be worked out between the two groups better than the temporary imposition of billeting on a town.

One way out from this latter torment was to insure against it by building special facilities to accommodate troops should they arrive. By AD 185 the village of Phaenae in Syria had built a 'hostelry' or *xenona* which secured them exemption from billeting in private homes.⁴¹ A lack of billets could lead to the occupation of a town's public spaces, which, given the nature of ancient society, would probably be regarded as a worse misfortune than the loss of individual houses. At Rome Severus' men on their arrival occupied porticoes and religious buildings (*SHA Sev.* 7). Nor was this exceptional: as noted above, the temple of Azzanathkona in Dura-Europus was commandeered and a suggestive edict of Valentinian and Valens specifically prohibits the use of synagogues as billets, going on to state that only private houses not religious buildings were to be used for this purpose (*Cod. Theod.* 7.8.2).

Far from Libanius' disingenuous delight, cities were horrified at the prospect of billeting and willing to pay to avoid it. The descent of a field army on a town meant great hardship, especially for the aristocracy. In extreme circumstances the consumption of local supplies could lead to famine;⁴² when Theodosius announced that he would use his own resources

⁴⁰ According to Procop. *Secret History* 23.24, even Constantinople itself was not exempt, with 70,000 'barbarians' being billeted there.

⁴¹ *OGIS* 609. At least this was the theory; the very existence of this inscription, which is an official reply to the town, shows that private houses must have been illegally used for billeting on at least one occasion.

⁴² See Downey (1950). The enormous scale of supplies needed for a major expedition is illustrated by Skeat (1964) papyrus 1 dating to AD 298, which deals with the preparations for a visit by Diocletian to Alexandria; see also Amm. Marc. 21.6.6 and 16.4.1.

to fight his campaign against the usurper Firmus this was, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, 'to the joy of the landowners' who would otherwise have been forced to finance the operation. The cry of the mob in Constantinople to Valens in 378 that, if he gave them weapons, they would fight themselves is unlikely to have been simple vainglory, as has often been assumed, but rather provoked by a wish to get the army away from the town as soon as possible. This dread of visiting armies opened up financial opportunities for unscrupulous commanders. Synesius comments that the *dux* of Africa, Cerealis, made money in precisely this way by moving his units around for no military reason but simply to extort money from various cities.⁴³

If conscription and billeting were not enough in themselves to create ill-feeling, the duties now undertaken by the army would also have made its relationship with the civilian population tense on at least some occasions. The army was increasingly used to collect taxes, and no one likes the tax-man, however just he may be. In theory the army was only to be used as a last resort for tax collection: a year of defaulting was allowed before the troops were sent in. However, it is clear that many civil authorities illegally contracted soldiers straight away to make their life easier, as a law of Arcadius and Honorius threatens severe penalties for this abuse, including personal liability for twice the amount due and deportation.⁴⁴ Abinnaeus was instructed to provide his local procurator of the imperial estates, Flavius Macarius, with a detachment to help him collect taxes that were due and another, fragmentary, letter of complaint sent to Abinnaeus hints that his men were none too gentle in their approach to this duty (*P Abinn.* 3, 27). Such brutality was certainly not new in Abinnaeus' time: over a hundred years earlier we see similar complaints from the *Saltus Burritanus*, the modern Sidi Ali Djebin. Here a tax-collector has used soldiers to 'arrest, molest, and throw in irons' various members of the local community and ordered them to be beaten with rods and clubs. These included Roman citizens, showing that even at this relatively early date citizenship was no protection against official thuggery (*CIL* VIII.10570).

However, it appears that the army was not always on the side of the authorities. According to an aggrieved Libanius, troops quartered in country villages would side with the villagers against the tax-collectors and so prevent rich landowners collecting their tax revenue (*Lib. Or.* 47.13). For this protection the soldiers were rewarded with meat and wine by the villagers. The irony here is that the reward provided by the villagers is precisely that which their taxes would have contributed (being liable the collectors

⁴³ Theodosius, *Amm. Marc.* 29.9.10; Constantinople, Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 4.38; Synesius, *Ep.* 129.

⁴⁴ Soldiers to be used as a last resort, *Cod. Theod.* 11.1.34; penalties for premature use of soldiers, *Cod. Theod.* 11.7.16; Arcadius and Honorius, *Cod. Theod.* 11.7.16.

would of course have to pay the amount to the authorities anyway). While Libanius presents the whole business as a form of military protection racket, Rostovtzeff stood this accusation on its head and saw it as evidence that the Roman army was now one of 'mobilised peasants' or 'peasant proletarians' who would be naturally inclined to sympathize with their fellow peasants.⁴⁵ Neither view is likely to be wholly correct. We are probably seeing here an advanced stage of an army being integrated into the local community and regarding itself as part of that community. The troops themselves might have been recruited from the village and hence have an immediate fellow feeling with the rest of the inhabitants who could well have been their relatives. This would not necessarily entail that they would have had a general sympathy with the peasants of other communities, and letters of complaint to Abinnaeus show that soldiers were happy to collect taxes in a more than enthusiastic fashion. That the arrangement worked indicates the level of extortion which was likely to occur when tax-collectors arrived.

It was not, however, just the rank and file who would resist tax-collectors. According to Libanius many commanders were happy to do this as well. Again the reward might be simply the produce the tax would have collected in the first place, but Libanius darkly hints that this was a tactic to obtain land on the cheap, as the town councillors would be forced to sell to meet their tax obligations. There were official concerns about soldiers acquiring land in the province where they served and the practice was expressly forbidden, though the inheritance of such estates was permitted.⁴⁶ The reason given for the ban is to avoid soldiers being distracted from their duty by farming. Libanius' complaints, unless they are simply the moans of a disgruntled aristocrat for once not getting his own way, suggest that this law was much honoured in the breach.

The army was also used for other policing duties. Some of these were religious and may have caused severe local tension. During the great persecution soldiers were used to search out Christians. It is possible that Julian's troops forced the Antiochenes to carry them home after their feasts in the town's temples in order to insult the predominantly Christian population there, but Julian's army also produced Christian martyrs who refused to countenance the stripping of Christian emblems from the standards and perhaps a Christian regicide.⁴⁷ But the army was equally deployed against pagan places of worship – Artemius, the *dux Aegyptii*, for example, used his men to destroy pagan temples and idols in Alexandria. The praetorian prefect of the east, Cynegius did the same, destroying, *inter alia*, the massive temple of temple of Jupiter at Apamea in Syria and the temples

⁴⁵ Rostovtzeff (1957) 1.467. ⁴⁶ *Digest* 49.16.9 (Marcian), 49.16.13 (Macer).

⁴⁷ The best-attested martyrs in Julian's army were the standard bearers, Bonosus and Maximilianus, *BHL* 1427; for a full discussion of this text see Woods (1995a). Julian's assassin, Baynes (1937).

of Gaza, billeting his troops on pagans in the town and using them to cow any opposition with violence.⁴⁸ After the triumph of Christianity, the army was employed in inter-Christian disputes too; for example the Arian bishop of Alexandria, Lucius, sent the army to attack Trinitarian monks in the neighbouring desert. Soldiers were also used against the Donatists in the equally bitter and more protracted struggle between them and the official Church in north Africa.⁴⁹ Troops were deployed to suppress Monophysite rebellions in Palestine and Egypt after the council of Chalcedon; in Alexandria this involved the Massacre of a pro-Monophysite crowd in the theatre. The Monophysite chronicler Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre records a number of attacks on the Monophysites in the eastern empire by soldiers. Some of these may have been the work of zealous sectarians acting on their own initiative, for example the two *speculatores* who killed ninety Monophysite monks in AD 502. On other occasions, however, troops were used in an official capacity – the *stratelates* of Edessa, Pharasmenes, was instrumental in expelling Monophysite monks from their monasteries, and later the patriarch of Antioch, Ephrem Bar Aphiana, used troops to persecute the Monophysites in a systematic fashion and administer orthodox communion to unwilling locals at sword-point.⁵⁰ In these cases, however, the army simply seems to have been obeying orders rather than acting out of religious zeal. A wide range of religious beliefs were to be found in its ranks. We find military personnel making dedications at the pagan shrine at Lydney in Gloucestershire in the late fourth century. The army's ranks also contained Donatist sympathizers, and heretics were allowed to serve with the colours.⁵¹ One Donatist author, perhaps predictably, describes soldiers involved in the persecution of his sect as 'summoned to perform a crime, they thought only of their pay', rather than dwelling on any religious motives they might have had, implying a professional indifference to sectarian matters on their part. At Alexandria troops were happy to suppress Monophysites at the instance of the Chalcedonian patriarch, Proterius, but soon afterwards were, according to the Monophysite Peter the Iberian, equally happy to arrest and kill Proterius when his actions looked like provoking civil war.⁵² Similarly although the Byzantine fleet was blessed before it set out on its expedition against Arian Vandal Africa in AD 533, it is

⁴⁸ Artemius, Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 3.14; Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 4.30; Cynegius, Apamea, Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 5.21; Gaza, Mark the Deacon 63–4.

⁴⁹ Lucius, Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 6.20; army used against Donatists, see *Passio Benedicti Martyris Marculi*, PL VIII.760–6, esp. §3.

⁵⁰ Ps.-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, *Chronicle* (Witakowski (1996) trans.): *speculatores*, 5; Pharasmenes, 27; Ephrem Bar Aphiana, 37.

⁵¹ Donatist martyrs in the army, *Acta Maximiani et Isaac* = PL VIII.767–74; heretics in the army, *Cod. Theod.* 16.5.65.3; Lydney, *RIB* 2448.3.

⁵² Mercenary soldiers, *Sermo de passione SS. Donati et Advocati* = PL VIII.752–8, §6; Proterius, *Life of Peter the Iberian*, 64–6. The orthodox Evagrius, while happy to record the suppression of Monophysites

striking that Belisarius uses no sectarian rhetoric when addressing his troops in the course of the campaign.⁵³ This wide spread of religious belief in the army and its seeming willingness to enforce commands against any sect suggests that the army should be seen as a tool in religious disputes rather than having a view which it wished to enforce on the population at large. Some care was taken, however, to avoid the use of local *limitanei* forces in enforcing religious decrees on the local population from which they were drawn, showing that service in the army did not divorce the troops from their local communities' sensibilities.⁵⁴

More normal police work was also carried out by the army. The most spectacular examples are the suppression of riots in Antioch in 387 and of the Nika riots of 532 in Constantinople itself.⁵⁵ Troops could supervise those performing manual labour for a town and were not averse to whipping those they thought were shirking (*Lib. Or.* 1.27). Demetrius, an official in charge of enforcing the imperial natron monopoly, instructed Abinnaeus to seize any contraband natron that came to his attention (*P Abinn.* 9). A certain Alypius wrote a sharp letter to the village scribe of Thraso, pointing out that if he did not report how much grain was stored there he would be forced to do so 'in the presence of a soldier' (*P Flor.* 137). This became a common threat and is an indication of the army's increasing role in this field.

This involvement brought the army into conflict with the local civil authorities. While some areas of the empire, such as the north of Britain, were under martial law, most areas had civil authorities whose powers were slowly being usurped. Troops appear to have been immune from civilian courts, so some use of military courts was inevitable (*P Flor.* 137). Libanius outlines the abuses which could happen in such circumstances:

a soldier provokes a market trader, jeering at him and being provocative. Then he grabs hold of him and pushes him about. Then hands are laid on the soldier too, but it seems that this is a different matter – such men may not raise either their voices or hands against a soldier, so this man, doomed to suffer, is tied up and taken to the military headquarters where he pays not to be beaten to death . . .

This, according to Libanius, an admittedly hostile source, was a daily occurrence with the poor being helpless in the face of abuse from soldiers.⁵⁶

However, military jurisdiction appears to have crept into the wider sphere with commanders beginning to act as judges for their local communities, effectively cutting out the civilian powers from one of their important roles;

by soldiers (*Hist. eccl.* 2.5), attributes Proterius' death to rioters in the town rather than the troops (*Hist. eccl.* 2.8).

⁵³ See Kaegi (1965). ⁵⁴ See MacCoull (1995).

⁵⁵ Antioch, *Lib. Or.* 19.34–36; Nika riots, Procop. *Wars* 1.23–4.

⁵⁶ *Lib. Or.* 47.33; maltreatment, *Lib. Or.* 47.6.

an example is Laronius Secundinus, the prefect of *cohors xx Palmyrenorum*, who was acting as a *iudex* in civilian cases in AD 235 at Dura-Europus (*P Dura* 125, 126, 127). Appeals to military, rather than civilian, authorities grew in the fourth century, despite a string of legislation declaring it to be illegal to act in this way.⁵⁷ This encroachment is illustrated by the Abinnaeus archive. Some grey areas are present here such as the case of Flavius Priscus and his wife who asked Abinnaeus for redress against those who had burgled them. As Priscus was a veteran, perhaps Abinnaeus' intervention is understandable, but this is not the case with a civilian litigant from Heropolis who asks Abinnaeus to arrest another civilian, Zoilus, because he has stolen his pigs, or with Aurelius Sacaon from Theadelphia who accuses Heron of stealing eighty-two of his sheep.⁵⁸ Attempts were made to keep the two centres of authority apart – military commanders were instructed to have nothing to do with municipal authorities and attacks on local councillors were subject to heavy fines (*Cod. Theod.* 12.1.128) – but it appears that these rules were unenforceable on the ground. By the sixth century the commanders of the *numeri* based at Nessana and Syene seem to have become the local legal authorities for their entire communities.⁵⁹ Such a shift should not come as a surprise; military commanders would often be nearer to the point of grievance than the civil authorities and, as their men began to blend with, and be drawn from, the local civilian community, be at least as familiar with the complaints. They would also be more able to act to deal with problems and no more venal than their civilian counterparts. For many civilians therefore military intervention in judicial matters may not have seemed like an imposition at all.

If there is one thing that late antique sources are agreed upon, it is that the army cost a lot of money. When complaining about Diocletian's expansion of the army Lactantius draws the following conclusion:

There began to be fewer men who paid taxes than there were who received wages; so that the means of the husbandmen being exhausted by enormous impositions, the farms were abandoned, cultivated grounds became woodland, and universal dismay prevailed . . .

(Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 7)

Lactantius is writing Christian polemic against a pagan emperor and so cannot be taken at face value; but nevertheless the sentiments he expresses seem to be generally held at some level or other. The anonymous author of *De rebus bellicis*, for example, who had less of an axe to grind against the establishment than Lactantius, nevertheless believed the army cost too

⁵⁷ *Cod. Iust.* 7.48.2 (Gordian); *Cod. Iust.* 3.26.7 (AD 349), *P Oxy.* 1101 (AD 367–70); *Cod. Theod.* 2.1.9 (AD 397).

⁵⁸ Priscus, *P Abinn.* 47; Zoilus, *P Abinn.* 53; Aurelius, *P Abinn.* 44.

⁵⁹ For the Nessana papyri see Casper and Kraemer (1958); the relevant document here is papyrus 19. For Syene, see Keenan (1990).

much and wrote precisely to solve this problem (*De rebus bellicis* 1 and 5). The demands made were harsh and bitterly resented. *SHA's Life of Probus* reflects a general prejudice when it states that Probus made the army work for the *annona* as it had no right to it for free, implying that the civilian population often believed that it received nothing worthwhile in return for paying the *annona* to the army. The author goes on to draw a picture of a hypothetical golden age when there would be no soldiers and no provincial would have to pay for their upkeep; contemporary rabbinical texts also paint a bleak picture of the tax regime.⁶⁰

The breakdown of the Empire in the third century had led to the general payment of the army in kind. Such levies had always been possible, but it was only in the later period that they were institutionalized as the normal form of payment.⁶¹ Abuse of taxation in kind was not a new phenomenon in the late Empire: it is mentioned by Tacitus in his *Agricola* as occurring in the first century AD (Tac. *Agr.* 19). The amount of these taxes, known as an indiction, varied annually. Normally the high command sent the data of how many men were under their command and this was used to compute the amount required. If an underestimate was made or allegedly made, a second levy, a superindiction, could be raised. This cumbersome system gave enormous opportunities for corruption at every stage of the operation.⁶² While provision was made for the crediting of overpayments for the following year, this occurs in a law ordering that only produce that was strictly necessary be procured, so it is likely that overtaxation was a regular form of abuse (*Cod. Theod.* 11.5.1).

At times provisions were demanded which did not exist in the province, causing enormous problems. The author of *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* notes that one of the '30 tyrants', Ballista, made a point of exacting from a province material not produced there. The same grievance is mentioned by Procopius in the sixth century.⁶³ An unnecessary superindiction was an obvious way for a local governor to make money; in 357 Julian while Caesar in Gaul refused to countenance one which Florentius the praetorian prefect wished to hold. Ammianus comments that superindications were prone to inflict 'incurable wounds' on provinces and that Julian went on to prove that the initial indiction, far from being an underestimate, was an overestimate of what was required (Amm. Marc. 17.3.1–5). Julian appears to have stumbled on what, according to Libanius writing in Antioch at the other end of the empire, was a standard form of corrupt behaviour – the

⁶⁰ *SHA Prob.* 20, 23; discussion of rabbinical material, *Isaac* (1990) 285–91; cf pp. 401–6 above.

⁶¹ For a detailed discussion of these taxes, see pp. 403–9 above. For a general discussion of taxation during this period, see Kelly (1998) and Barnish et al. (2000) 170–93.

⁶² For the prohibition of superindications without express imperial permission see *Cod. Theod.* 11.6.1 and 11.16.11. See also the general discussion in Jones (1964) 451.

⁶³ Ballista, *SHA Tyr. Trig.* 18; Procop. *Secret History* 23.9–17.

keeping of dead men on the books in order that their rations could be claimed, an accusation echoed by Themistius.⁶⁴ When emperor, and possibly as a result of this experience, Julian required all superindictions to have the emperor's direct permission (*Cod. Theod.* 11.16.10). His law was reaffirmed by Valens in 365 and Gratian in 382. This continuing sequence of laws probably indicates a continual problem, something confirmed by the fact that being exempted from *superindicta* was a sought-after privilege.⁶⁵

The responsibility for procuring the tax, like that for providing recruits, was laid at the door of the local authorities. Tax-collectors (normally called *procuratores* or *susceptores*) were appointed by city councils who were liable for the amount of tax demanded, though this liability was underwritten by the council itself to ensure that the central authorities would not lose out (*PSI* 684). Oddly, tax collection was a popular duty as it opened plenty of opportunities for illegal money-making. One way of doing this was to combine the duty of tax-collector with that of money-lender; such an individual would force the poor to pay their entire contribution in one fell swoop (*Amm. Marc.* 16.5.15), and if they were unable to do so, they would then be offered the chance to 'borrow' money at exorbitant rates of interest to meet the demand. The procurator of the lower Thebaid in the mid-fourth century, Aurelius Isidorus, notes that some of the collectors of meat for the army went against orders and accepted cash instead of meat, demanding a rate much higher than the official one. Aurelius proclaims that this is 'utterly unacceptable to the taxpayers' and threatens the perpetrators with capital punishment. He then goes on to blame the victims too by commenting that they should not submit to illicit demands, but only hand over what is stipulated by the regulations. How they would be able to resist armed extortion is not a matter he sees fit to discuss (*P Panop.* 2 col. 9).

Delivery of goods demanded was again made the responsibility of local council officials who could be ordered to travel anywhere within their own province at a great deal of expense and inconvenience. At Oxyrhynchus the councillors given the task of transporting wine and barley to the army simply fled, and the council was reluctant to name substitutes in case the same thing happened again (*P Oxy.* 1414, 1415). Another papyrus records how an official in charge of the *annona* was beaten up and thrown off a grain ship by one Aurelius Claudianus assisted by the convoy's commander. Probably the official had either uncovered criminal activity or was attempting to set up some of his own (*P Panop.* 2 col. 4; *PSI* 298).

At their final destination the goods would be placed into a public storehouse (*mansio publica*) whose upkeep was also the local community's responsibility. Its superintendent (again local) then handed over the produce to an army quartermaster (*actuarius*). Field army units were given

⁶⁴ *Lib. Or.* 47.31; *Them. Or.* 10.136b. ⁶⁵ *Cod. Theod.* 20.16.11, 11.6.1.

warrants to draw supplies from provinces which possessed a surplus, their quartermasters (*opinatores*) being required to present these warrants to the provincial governor who had to pay up within a year (*Cod. Theod.* 11.7.16). Abuses did not stop at the warehouse: simple thieving was a problem and supplies were kept under lock and key (*P Abinn.* 26). The handing over of provisions without a record being kept, thus allowing them to be drawn again, was an obvious form of illegal practice. In an attempt to stop this Valentinian required the production of official receipts from the military quartermaster, the *actuarius*, before the civil superintendents of the granaries handed over anything to them (*Cod. Theod.* 7.4.11). Aurelius Victor gives a particularly savage account of the *actuarii*, who were not only at the end of the redistribution chain, but possibly also responsible for the initial assessments of foodstuffs as well, which put them in a particularly powerful position to abuse the system. Victor's comments suggest that this power was all too obvious to their contemporaries. According to Victor the *actuarii* were

worthless, venal, deceitful, seditious, and grasping – created by nature so to speak to perpetrate and hide fraud. They control supplies and so are the enemies of those who collect the produce and of the well-being of farmers since they are adept in bribing at the right time those whose stupidity and ruin has provided their wealth . . .

(Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 33)

Victor's comments come in a description of a third-century coup, but he also takes care to say that the sins of the *actuarii* are to the fore 'especially in these times', i.e. in the fourth century. Valentinian made *actuarii* personally responsible for the goods that they did not deliver within thirty days, which might suggest that much corruption occurred at this point. As an incentive for honest behaviour if an *actuarius* had a clean record for ten years he would be raised to the rank of *perfectissimus*.⁶⁶

Not all corruption was due to the *actuarii*; often there was an attempt to collect allowances in cash rather than in kind and to do so in arrears in order to wait for a time of shortage when the market price would be higher. This led to food rotting and the potential imposition of a superindiction on the provincials.⁶⁷ Field army commanders would help themselves from storehouses without getting previous permission from the civil authorities (*Cod. Theod.* 7.4.3). Army units would also on occasions simply demand extra supplies from the local population, the nickname for these being *cenaticum*, or 'dinner-money' (*Cod. Theod.* 7.4.12). One potential reason for this abuse may have been the habit of some officers of simply stealing the lower ranks' allowances and then letting them off their duties so that

⁶⁶ *Cod. Theod.* 7.4.16; *Cod. Iust.* 12.38; *Cod. Theod.* 8.1.10.

⁶⁷ *Cod. Theod.* 7.4.1, 7.4.17, 7.4.20, 8.4.6.

they could scrape a living. This is a complaint we hear from Libanius and, according to Synesius, was the practice of *dux Cerealis* in Africa.⁶⁸ This abuse may also explain the phenomenon of 'wandering soldiers' who occasionally terrorized the countryside. Such errant soldiers are used in a plausible lie told by a Roman spy to the Persian commander of Amida in AD 503 who refers to small bands of soldiers 'who are forever wandering around the countryside in fours or fives, attacking the local country-folk' (Procop. *Wars* 1.9.7).

The requisitioning of transport was also a major problem. The utopia in the *SHA Life of Probus*, as well as envisaging a world without the *annona*, also longs for a time when 'oxen will be used for ploughing and horses born for peaceful use', for all too often in the writer's day they were removed by the army. Constantius noted that 'the exaction of extra post-horses has destroyed the estates of many while fattening the greed of a few'. We may have an incident involving a dispute over requisitioned transport from Oxyrhynchus where Horigenes writes to a friend that he had been delayed three days there as he had been arrested by one of the governor's soldiers 'on a pretext to do with horses'.⁶⁹ Although technically such animals had to be returned to their owners, very often they were not. If they were they were likely to be in a poor state. The emperor Constantine noted and attempted to stop the overdriving of commandeered animals and prohibited the confiscation of oxen which were used for tilling. His son Constantius limited the number of wagons a legion on the march could take, and Valentinian and Valens later placed a limit on the amount of weight to be carried by commandeered wagons and animals. Whether such laws could be enforced is, of course, a different question.⁷⁰ The army may also have been able to exact forced labour from civilians. A series of slabs marking repairs to Hadrian's Wall, and normally attributed to the rebuilding of the wall under count Theodosius (AD 368–9), record work done not by soldiers, but by tribal groups. The majority of these groups are from the south of Britain, so we have evidence of at least enforced payment for military work (something paralleled in the east) and perhaps for this civilian labour transported over some considerable distance.⁷¹

The relationship between soldier and civilian was therefore a fraught one. The army was seen as expensive, its behaviour rapacious and its efficiency questionable. Nevertheless not all aspects of living near to soldiers were bad. Soldiers dabbled in, and gave a boost to, the local economy. Abinnaeus had a rentier income from Alexandria and seems to have had other business

⁶⁸ Lib. *Or.* 2.37; Synesius, *Ep.* 62. ⁶⁹ *Cod. Theod.* 8.5.7; Horigenes, *P Oxy.* 3859.

⁷⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 8.5.1, 2; *Cod. Theod.* 8.5.11, 8.5.17.

⁷¹ *RIB* 1672, 1673 (the Durotriges of Ilchester), *RIB* 1843 (the Dumnonii, based in Devon), *RIB* 1962 (the Catuvellauni based in Essex). The local tribe, the Brigantes, are also recorded as working on the wall: *RIB* 2022.

interests, while another soldier at Dionysias was able to loan a villager wheat, suggesting that he may have been a landowner in the locality (*P Flor.* 1 30). Soldiers provided a ready market, albeit a potentially dangerous one, ripe for exploitation. The introduction to Diocletian's price edict states that its prime purpose was to stop merchants exploiting the army with inflated prices (the merchants' opinion is not recorded).⁷² Therefore wherever the army was to be found, there were also entrepreneurs ready to tap this source of revenue. The enervating *luxus* of the army in Asia which upset Ammianus, and his complaint that some soldiers had cups heavier than their swords, shows that there was money to be made.⁷³ The evidence of the hiring of actors and prostitutes in Dura-Europus discussed above shows that this market was in both goods and services. Apart from the trappings of *luxuria*, soldiers also have a tendency to be obsessed with their equipment, and this market too found eager suppliers: from South Shields close to the Scottish border we have the case of a Palmyran flagseller, Barates and his former slave and then wife, Regina, a Catuvellaunian from southern England who might also have once formed part of the military service industry (*RIB* 1065). Manufacturers of various other military artifacts such as swords, shields, shield-covers and cloaks also abounded. An edict requiring that soldiers in Illyricum be given a *solidus* each for buying cloaks shows the circular nature of this economy, as the tax would be taken from the civilian population and then recycled into it by such purchases. On occasions the army would even buy bricks from civilians to build its outposts.⁷⁴

Despite the problems outlined above, as has already been seen, soldiers could sometimes take the side of the local community against outsiders. In particular, we may expect that this was the case with the *limitanei* who in part seem to have lived among the local community. Paniscus' letter to his wife asking her to bring his military equipment suggests that he was living at home not in barracks, and when Serapion was beaten up by the soldier Julius for daring to ask about his daughter's sow the implication of the complaint is again that Julius was living in Philadelphia, not in his unit's barracks. Similarly the tenor of Demetrius' complaint to Abinnaeus about the behaviour of Athenodorus is that Athenodorus too was living among civilians in the village of Ibion, as Demetrius tells Abinnaeus that he has written to him in preference to others because he is sure that Abinnaeus will summon Athenodorus to the camp (*castra*) and do the right thing 'in all ways'. In the same way Aurelius Aboul's complaint that one of Abinnaeus' men, Paul, has shorn eleven of his sheep by night and was accompanied in the crime by another soldier, Melas, and the son of the local nightwatchman suggests that these soldiers were living away from barracks. We also have

⁷² Lauffer (1971) 95, l.8. ⁷³ *Luxus*, Amm. Marc. 27.9.6; cups, Amm. Marc. 22.4.6.

⁷⁴ Cloaks: *Cod. Theod.* 7.6.4, see also *Cod. Theod.* 7.6.5; bricks: MacMullen (1963) 91.

evidence for the dispersal of troops from Dura-Europus where papyri show that scattered detachments of *cohors xx Palmyrenorum* were active in villages around the town. The references are opaque, but at the very least these troops were undertaking police action in these localities and might well have been billeted or simply lived there too (*P. Dura* 100, 101). Moreover, while previous views of the *limitanei* becoming ‘soldier-farmers’ are now heavily challenged, these static troops do seem to have become a part of the local community where they lived.

The last phases of the occupation of Hadrian’s Wall saw standard barrack blocks replaced by ‘chalets’ which may have housed not simply soldiers but soldiers and their families.⁷⁵ An example of a unit which was completely integrated with the local community in the eastern Empire is the ‘Numerus of the most loyal Theodosians’ stationed at Nessana in the mid-sixth century. The members of this unit owned property and had business interests in the village. One of the unit’s soldiers, Abd al-Gâ, sold his set of fields for a share in a courtyard and baker’s oven, another, Flavius Aws, owned an olive press, while a third, Menas, appears to be the lessee of a vineyard. The soldiers also married into the local community. This integration is also seen at Syene, where troops continued with civilian jobs such as that of boatman while serving in the army. Despite this high degree of integration, the papyri from these sites also show that the units retained their military integrity and boasted a complex command structure of ranks.⁷⁶

A spindle whorl found in the fort at Nessana probably dates from after the fort was abandoned, but forts, like the units they contained, became intimately bound to the local civilian population. When *numeri* were summoned away to serve, the local population often moved into the abandoned fort. Fortifications also began to be built by private individuals and the Church. The *numerus* of Adrona had its fort provided by a local landowner, Thomas, and his nephew Jacob, who had also built a bath-house in the village. The fort’s dedicatory inscription states, ‘It is customary to serve the many by volunteering funds for local defence’. The fort contained a church which was a place of worship for the entire community, not just the *numerus*. Similar actions and sentiments are found at Salamis on the Orontes and Anasartha. At Bouz-el-Khanzir the town fort was funded by the local bishop, and the Church was also involved in building fortifications at Taroutia, where local landowners also played a role in this activity. Such initiatives are normally seen as reflecting on the state’s inability to provide defences for local communities – Procopius comments that Justinian neglected the *limitanei* to such a degree that they were forced to rely on

⁷⁵ Daniels (1980); for a general discussion of the last phases of Hadrian’s Wall, see Casey (1993) and Wilmott and Wilson (2000).

⁷⁶ The Nessana papyri are conveniently collected in Casper and Kraemer (1958): sale, no. 23; plot, no. 24; vineyard, no. 34; marriage and divorce, nos. 20 and 33. For Syene see Keenan (1990).

charity. Procopius' statement that Justinian used the reconstitution of a garrison at Thermopylae as an excuse to seize the civic funds of Greek towns, leaving them devoid of any funds for civilian repair work, may suggest another motive – that of protecting oneself against the rapacity of the centre by building a fort in the same way as the building of a *xenona* would avoid the problem of billeting.⁷⁷

As well as serving troops, veteran soldiers were also a common feature in civilian life. As at this date soldiers were mainly drawn from the locality where they served, it may be otiose to speculate on how successful their integration into those communities was. Iulius Ianuarius, a troop commander of the *ala Sebosiana* who settled outside Lancaster in the third century AD, was happy to dedicate to the local Celtic god of the area, quite possibly because he was a local and this was his god (*RIB* 600). No tension is recorded as existing between veterans and the communities into which they moved.⁷⁸ Yet privileges which distinguished veterans from their fellows were expected and obtained by veterans: 'why have we been made veterans if we have no grant of special imperial privileges?' was the chant of some before Constantine in AD 320 (*Cod. Theod.* 7.20.2.1). Some of these privileges involved immunity from degrading punishments such as being thrown to beasts or beaten with rods, but more importantly the veteran was immune from having to perform compulsory municipal duties and enjoyed, often with other members of his immediate family, substantial immunity from taxation.⁷⁹

These latter immunities included that from taxes levied on traders and customs duties. The privileges of the veterans naturally made this a status to be claimed without justification but, as has been seen, these privileges did not in contemporary eyes outweigh the benefits of attempting to escape from service in the first place.⁸⁰ Veterans were also given a bounty on discharge. Constantine made provisions for a tax-free start-up grant of 100 *folles* to be given to a veteran who wished to set up in trade (*Cod. Theod.* 7.20.3.1). The normal veteran's grant, however, was land. Under Constantine this was specified as 'vacant' land, i.e. either land devoid of previous owners or which had been abandoned. A more generous start-up grant of 25,000 *folles*, a yoke of oxen, and 100 measures of grain was made to veterans who wished to start farming (*Cod. Theod.* 7.20.3). The author of *De rebus bellicis* proposed a more rapid discharge from the colours as a

⁷⁷ Civilian occupation of forts, John of Epiphania, 6; Adrona, *IGLSyr.* 1682; Salamis on the Orontes, *IGLSyr.* 2524; Anasarcha, *IGLSyr.* 281; Bouz-el-Khanzir, *IGLSyr.* 270; Taroutia, *IGLSyr.* 1630, 1631; neglect of the *limitanei*, Procop. *Secret History* 24.12–14; Thermopylae, Procop. *Secret History* 26.31.

⁷⁸ Van Damm (1985) 125 suggests that Martin of Tours' failure to establish a monastery at Milan shows a lack of 'toleration for ex-soldiers . . . who refused to "retire" and become civilians again', but produces little concrete evidence for this view.

⁷⁹ Degrading punishments, *Digest* 49.18.1 (Arrius); tax immunities, *Cod. Theod.* 7.20.2.2.

⁸⁰ Attempts to usurp veterans' privileges, *Cod. Theod.* 7.20.12.

way of restoring the farming community. For him these veteran farmers would then become taxpayers and thus contribute to the economy; what he forgets is that the privileges demanded by veterans would stop this happening. Town councils, however, had a natural tendency to forget these privileges and attempt to draw veterans into the economy. Valentinian, Valens and Gratian restated all veteran privileges in AD 366, which perhaps shows that such forgetfulness could enjoy short-time success. Another peril facing veterans dealt with by these three emperors was that owners of abandoned land would turn up at harvest time and demand part of the produce as rent (*Cod. Theod.* 7.2.9). As in the early Empire, veterans became discontented with the quality of land they were given. Valentinian and Valens extended Constantine's provisions for veterans' land to include land other than vacant land (*Cod. Theod.* 7.20.8.1), creating a potential flash point with the civilian population as this new dispensation could have involved forcible dispossession of civilian landowners. However, despite recent research showing the vibrancy of rural life in late antiquity and thus underlining such a problem,⁸¹ no cases of clashes of this kind are recorded in our sources.

Veterans could prove a useful pool of military expertise in hard times: at Autun, for example, it was the veterans rather than the imperial garrison who provided an effective defence for the town in AD 356. Yet despite their privileges not all veterans integrated, or at least lived peaceably alongside the civilian population. Some, presumably those farming 'vacant lands' on the edge of the empire, saw fit to collude with barbarians, others indulged in banditry. This problem was apparent as early as the reign of Constantius II, who stipulated that such veterans be put to death and others be stripped of their privileges if they disturbed the peace. Nor were veterans allowed more freedom than other civilians to form religious associations, which often formed the core of political activity.⁸²

Alongside veteran farmers in the late Empire was another military innovation – barbarians given land within the empire in return for military service. The army may increasingly have recruited from barbarian tribes whose members seemed much more willing to serve than citizens of the Empire.⁸³ Whereas in the past the Roman army was an engine for at least partial Romanization, in the late Empire there are some occasions when such recruits were to serve under officers of their own race and retain their own customs. An example of this is a dedication by 'Hnaufriidius' unit' to 'the Alaisiagae, Baudihillia and Frigabis, and the divine inspiration of

⁸¹ See Banaji (2001) ch. 1; Whittaker and Garnsey (1998); Ward-Perkins (2000).

⁸² Autun, *Amm. Marc.* 16.2.1; collusion, *Cod. Theod.* 7.1.1; stripping of privileges, *Cod. Theod.* 7.20.7; restrictions on association, *Digest* 47.112 (Ulpian).

⁸³ But see Nicasie (1998); Whitby (2004) 165–70 for arguments against this view, and cf. pp. 298–300 above.

the Emperor' found at Hadrian's Wall (*RIB* 1576). The epigraphic habit and form of the altar are the only Roman things about this dedication which otherwise has a strongly Germanic flavour. Ammianus records the Goths recoiling in horror after confronting a blood-drinking Saracen serving with the Roman army.⁸⁴ The barbarization of the army could have led to the civilian population feeling less affection and identity with it. Zosimus records barbarians in the army subjecting the citizens of Philadelphia in Lydia to armed extortion, but the incident is no worse than many recorded of soldiers from inside the empire and Zosimus, despite his prejudice against barbarians, produces no further examples.⁸⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre is always at pains to stress the foreign nature of the troops involved in attacks on his community. This could suggest that both racial and confessional tensions existed between the local population and troops stationed among them; equally it could be a ploy by the chronicler to emphasize the sanctity and fortitude of his own people to his readers.⁸⁶

But, on the other side of the equation, barbarian troops were no doubt the vectors of a striking phenomenon of late antiquity which could be regarded as the reverse of 'Romanization', namely 'barbarization'. The adoption of non-Roman dress can be seen on a variety of well-known monuments from late antiquity such as the *missorium* of Theodosius the Great found at Almedralejo in Spain. Barbarian belt-buckles and fittings became popular accessories to such an extent that they have led to confusion about the degree of barbarian settlement in parts of the empire such as along the so-called 'Saxon shore' in Britain. These trends were so powerful that Arcadius and Honorius were moved to ban the wearing of trousers in Rome itself (*Cod. Theod.* 14.10.2).

Alongside simple recruitment of barbarians was another phenomenon, the settlement of barbarians within the Roman empire itself.⁸⁷ The first of these groups were known as *laeti* and were the product of defeated people forcibly resettled by the Romans. Supervised by a Roman prefect or placed under the jurisdiction of the local town, they were given land to farm with the obligation to provide recruits for the army. *Laeti* were heavily discriminated against under Roman law, which forbade their inter-marriage with Roman citizens, but this was probably of little concern to them as they appear to have retained their own social organization. The *laeti* appear to have been restricted to Gaul and northern Italy, but other groups were present elsewhere in the empire. Marcus Aurelius despatched some 5,500 Sarmatians to Britain and Probus located groups of

⁸⁴ *RIB* 1576, cf. *RIB* 1593, 1594; blood-drinking Saracen, Amm. Marc. 31.16.6.

⁸⁵ Zos. 4.31.1. For this issue in general see Elton (1996b) 136–52.

⁸⁶ For a different view of the extent of barbarian acculturation in the army see pp. 298–300 above.

⁸⁷ For a comprehensive list of barbarians settled in the Roman empire, see de Ste Croix (1981) Appendix III.

Burgundians and Vandals there who Zosimus says proved 'very useful' to the emperor in subsequent revolts. In AD 372 Valentinian sent an Alaman chief to Britain to command a substantial unit of Alamanni already stationed there.⁸⁸ Such groups could be seen as providing the same sort of local security for the central authorities as *coloniae* had once done, being loyal to the centre and having no ties, at least initially, with the locals. Early *coloniae* had been highly unpopular with the local population as they involved the loss of land, but this is unlikely to have been the case with these later settlements. The barbarians appeared to have been placed on unfarmed or abandoned land. A panegyric to Constantius Chlorus of AD 297 emphasizes this point (adding that the process helped lower the rate of the *annona*) along with the new settlers' eagerness to join up and their consequent Romanization as the result of their enlistment.⁸⁹ Such settlement may have been welcomed locally rather than resented, as cultivated land would not provide shelter for bandits and the settlements would often provide a buffer between other inhabitants and the barbarians beyond the empire (*Pan. Lat.* 4.8–9).

This process of settlement changed out of all proportion when the emperor Valens allowed a large number of Goths to enter Roman territory in AD 376. These Goths were given land in Thrace and gave pledges to supply military recruits to the Roman army when requested to do so. Although this migration had the trappings of a Gothic surrender, it is likely that the agreement was on a more even footing than this as the Goths appear to have had a say in where they were settled.⁹⁰ Valens had initially wished to inflict a crushing defeat on the Goths, but had failed to do so and was forced to rationalize the circumstances as best he could to save face in front of his people.⁹¹ However, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, Valens acted in the hope that the Goths would provide recruits for the army which would allow him to extract money rather than men from the provinces and it is significant that the change from taxation in kind to taxation in cash begins to take hold at this point in time. The Church historian Socrates accuses Valens of simple greed and wishing to fill the treasury coffers at the expense of the army, but as a Trinitarian Socrates was naturally hostile to the emperor, who may well have seen Gothic immigration as both a more efficient way of raising troops who were of both a better calibre than those produced by the annual levy and one which

⁸⁸ Sarmatians, Dio Cass. 71.16.2; *RIB* 589; Probus, Zos. 1.68; Valentinian, Amm. Marc. 29.4.7. The Alamanni may have been settled near Almondbury in Yorkshire. For evidence of German troops in Britain, see *RIB* 1102 from Ebchester and *RIB* 1180 from Corbridge.

⁸⁹ The panegyric is perhaps a case of protesting too much. For settlements on abandoned land and the amount of such land, see Liebeschuetz (1990) ch. 2.

⁹⁰ See Heather (1991) 122–8 and (1996) 130–2.

⁹¹ This burden is shouldered by Them. *Or.* 10. See the discussion in Heather and Matthews (1991).

caused much less resentment.⁹² Mutual distrust and mismanagement led to open warfare between these Goths and the Romans which culminated in Valens' death at the spectacular Roman defeat of Adrianople in AD 378. Peace was finally made in AD 382 by Theodosius the Great. This time the treaty allowed the Goths to live within the Roman empire as an autonomous unit which would provide troops when required. The loss of manpower at Adrianople and Theodosius' ensuing embroilment in civil war meant that reliance on barbarian troops increased. The use of such troops caused anxiety in some circles, an anxiety which can be seen in Pacatus' Panegyric to Theodosius which labours the point that the emperor's new troops had Roman commanders (*Pan. Lat.* 2.33).

Similar 'federate' groups also emerged in other parts of the empire, but little attempt seems to have been made to integrate these barbarian settlers into Roman society and while some of their leaders became thoroughly Romanized, this is unlikely to have been the case with the bulk of the immigrants. Legally the two groups remained separate and forbidden to inter-marry (*Cod. Theod.* 3.13.14). Some upper-class writers were extremely hostile to Germanic elements: a fine example is provided by Synesius who advocated the removal of Germans from the army and the creation of all-citizen forces (*De regno* 14). Such hostility is likely to have been a product of senatorial jealousy and dislike of Romanizing German aristocrats such as Stilicho reaching eminence in the Empire. Julian during his coup saw fit to use this prejudice by writing to the Senate denouncing Constantine the Great for raising barbarians to the consulate. Ammianus Marcellinus, looking at matters from a soldier's rather than a politician's perspective, is inclined to be more even handed; he censors Julian for his hypocrisy (Julian raised the Frank Navitta to the consulate), and later is happy to liken the courage of an Alaman in the Roman army, Natuspardo, to that of traditional Roman heroes. Lower-class reactions to German soldiers and settlers may also have been ambivalent: Libanius records a riot in Constantinople where a Goth was lynched on account of his race and the pretender Procopius saw fit to rally his supporters by demouncing Valens as a 'base Pannonian'. This line seems to have had some success as the population of Chalcedon went on to abuse Valens as a 'sabaia-swiller' outside their walls. After his removal of Stilicho, Honorius is said to have contemplated setting his Roman troops on the Germans in his army, but decided against the plan because the Germans were too numerous. Such a plan would have relied on racial antipathy.⁹³

⁹² Amm. Marc. 31.4.4; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 4.34. For a thorough discussion of the problem, see Heather (1991).

⁹³ Lynching, Lib. 19.12, 20.14; Synesius, *De regno* 22a–26c; Julian's letter and Ammianus' reproach, Amm. Marc. 21.10.8; the courageous Alaman, Amm. Marc. 27.19.16; Procopius and Valens, Amm. Marc. 26.7.16; sabaia-swiller (sabaia was a Pannonian beer), Amm. Marc. 16.8.2; Lib. *Or.* 19.16, 20.14.

Set against this is evidence of cultural interchange between the two groups. Cemeteries along the Rhine and Loire yield both 'Roman' and 'Germanic' style burials. Cemeteries in these areas with a long past produce in this period a change to 'Germanic' style burials with no discernible change in skeletal remains. Post-Roman Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall has produced a contemporary amalgam of Romano-British and Saxon artefacts. Roman and barbarian therefore were interacting culturally, if not mixing physically. Such a mixture need not of course require any love lost on either side. In the fifth century Salvian, albeit a polemical source, asserts that there was flight even from the upper classes to barbarian areas in order to avoid 'injustice'. Salvian's near contemporary, Orosius, comments that units of the usurper Constantine III's army treated the inhabitants of Spain worse than the barbarian invaders of the peninsula, giving support to the idea of flight. In his account Salvian chooses to emphasize the wide differences between the two groups:

Though they differ from those to whom they flee in religion and language and are revolted by the stench of barbarian bodies and clothes . . . they still prefer to endure an unfamiliar life among the barbarians to savage injustice among the Romans.

Similar sentiments are echoed by the *Aulularia*, an early fifth-century play. In both cases there is physical, but little cultural, interaction between Roman and barbarian, though it suits Salvian's aim in particular of emphasizing the high degree of injustice within the empire to make the barbarians seem as primitive as possible. The barbarians themselves seem to have been more open than Rome in accepting those who wished to join them, so such flight would have been possible and was perhaps not seen by some in quite the negative light Salvian that suggests. An anonymous commentator who remarked 'the poor Roman imitates the Goth, while the rich Goth imitates the Roman' may well have got the social dynamics of his time right.⁹⁴

The final blending of the army and community may ironically have been caused by the return of monetary stability and a corresponding tendency to substitute cash payments for the *annona*, particularly in the western empire; by the fifth century this appears to have been the norm.⁹⁵ This led to another potential sort of abuse – a demand for payment in kind after monetary payment had been exacted. But more importantly it also led to units simply abandoning the army after prolonged periods without payment, a process which is well illustrated by chapter 20 of Eugippius' *Life of St Severinus*. Some units probably simply dissolved into the local community

⁹⁴ Cemeteries, James (1988) 44–51; Salvian, *De gubernatione dei* 5.22–24; Oros. 7.40; for a discussion of barbarian openness, see Liebeschuetz (1990) chs. 2 and 3; *Anon. Val.* 12.61.

⁹⁵ *Cod. Theod.* 12.6.28; *Nov. Val.* 3 13.

as by this time the lack of pay would already have led to soldiers leading a quasi-agrarian life of necessity; others may have been recruited into the ranks of landowners' private armies, the so-called *bucellarii*.⁹⁶ Another alternative was to remain as a unit, but to create or serve in a newly independent political unit. An incident of this sort is given by Jordanes who records that among the army marshalled against the Huns at the Catallanian fields were the Olibriones, whom he describes as 'one-time Roman soldiers' (Jord. *Get.* 36.191), while the best example of this phenomenon is the realm created by Aegidius and Syagrius in late fifth-century Gaul which endured for around twenty-five years before it was overrun. This course of action may have been the choice of what remained of the Roman army in Britain after the curial class rejected Rome's authority in AD 409; one probable example of such a phenomenon may be found at Birdoswald on Hadrian's Wall where parts of the Roman fort were rebuilt as a high-status hall. Similar traces of late occupation are to be found on other sites on this frontier.⁹⁷

These post-Roman kingdoms appear to have enjoyed local support and the troops there would have been seen as a local force fighting for a local cause, thus retaining a sense of identification with the local population which the Roman Empire had lost. It would also be much more in the interests of a local dynast than of a far-away emperor to restrain his men's depredations on the local population and they in their turn would have had stronger ties to those they fought for and hence been less inclined to abuse them in the first place than troops, particularly field army troops, of the Roman Empire. These breakaway enterprises seem to have been attempts to create local versions of a Roman-style political system and as such may have helped to stem increasing acculturation towards the barbarian way of life. The Olibriones must have been visibly 'former Romans' and Procopius speaks of such military units jealously preserving their *Romanitas* even to the extent of wearing the correct kind of shoes (Procop. *Wars* 5.12.17). Ironically, therefore, after a long period of distrust and dislike soldier and civilian may have become more united after the end of the Empire than they had been while it existed, and the army emerged as a better defender of *Romanitas* after the collapse of Rome than it had while it survived.

⁹⁶ *Cod. Theod.* 7.14.1 (AD 398) is a warning against landowners attempting to seduce *burgarii* or frontier troops. The equation here of *burgarii* with mule-drivers and slaves in imperial mills suggests that their prompt payment was not seen as a priority. *Cod. Theod.* 7.1.15 (AD 396) introduces a fine of five pounds of gold for keeping a soldier in one's personal service.

⁹⁷ See Dark (1992); Wilmott (1997); Wilmott and Wilson (2000).

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

	MILITARY	SOCIETY	POLITICAL
135–132 BC	First Sicilian slave war.		
133	Scipio Aemilianus takes Numantia in Spain.	Tiberius Gracchus proposes <i>lex agraria</i> ; it is passed, but he is later murdered.	Attalus III of Pergamum dies and bequeathes his kingdom to Rome.
124			Gaius Gracchus is elected tribune.
121			Gracchus and 3,000 followers are killed.
114			Mithridates VI of Pontus gains control of the Crimea.
113	Jugurtha sacks the Numidian capital, Cirta. The Cimbri defeat Cn. Carbo in Noricum.		
112–111	Rome declares war on Jugurtha, but achieves little, and makes peace.		
110	Jugurtha in Rome; war re-opened but Albinus and his army captured.		
109	Metellus campaigns against Jugurtha.		
108			Marius is first elected consul.
107	Marius takes Capsa in Numidia.	Marius recruits from the <i>proletarii</i> .	
106	Bocchus of Mauretania surrenders Jugurtha to Sulla.		
105	The Cimbri defeat the Romans at Arausio on the Rhône.		
104–100	Second Sicilian slave war.	Marius reorganizes the Roman army.	
102	Marius defeats the Teutones at Aquae Sextiae.		
101	Marius and Catulus defeat the Cimbri at Vercellae.		
100–98			Marius is consul for the sixth time, but his allies provoke violence and he leaves Rome.
90s		Growing Italian pressure for Roman citizenship.	

91–90	Social War breaks out between Romans and allies, and sees Roman reverses.		
90–89	Marius and Sulla turn the tide in the Social War.	Extension of citizenship defuses the Social War.	
88	Remaining Samnite rebels are defeated; First Mithridatic War breaks out; Mithridates overruns Asia Minor and massacres Romans there.		Sulla and Marius vie for power; Sulla marches on Rome and Marius flees.
87	Sulla besieges Pontic forces in Athens.		Cinna's revolution in Rome; Marius returns and massacres Sullans.
86	Sulla takes Athens and defeats Pontic army at second Chaeronea and Orchomenus.		
85	Mithridates brought to terms.		
83–82	Second Mithridatic War.		Sulla, supported by Pompey, returns to Italy, takes Rome and institutes reign of terror.
81–79	Sertorius sets up anti-Sullan régime in Spain.		Sulla dictator in Rome (dies 78).
77–76	Pompey campaigns inconclusively against Sertorius.		
74–72	Sertorius defeated in Spain. Mithridates invades Bithynia, but is driven from his kingdom by Lucullus.		
73–71	Italian slave revolt led by Spartacus achieves initial success but is suppressed by Crassus.		
70		Trial of Sicilian governor Verres for corruption.	Crassus and Pompey first become consuls.
69	Lucullus defeats Tigranes of Armenia at Tigranocerta.		
67	Pompey is given extraordinary powers, and clears the Mediterranean of pirates.		
66–62	Pompey campaigns in the east, creating provinces in Bithynia, Cilicia and Syria, and installing client kings.		Catilinarian conspiracy (63–62); consulship of Cicero (63).

	MILITARY	SOCIETY	POLITICAL
60			Pompey, Crassus and Caesar form the first triumvirate.
59			Caesar is consul for the first time.
58	Caesar defeats the Helvetii at Bibracte, and Ariovistus' Germans on the Rhine.		
57	Caesar conquers the Belgae, and annihilates the Nervii at the Sambre.		
56	Caesar defeats the Veneti.		
55-54	Caesar massacres the Teutones, crosses the Rhine and invades Britain twice.		Rioting in Rome.
53	Crassus invades Parthia, and is defeated and killed at Carrhae.		
52	Revolt of Vercingetorix in Gaul; Caesar takes Avaricum, is repulsed at Gergovia, but defeats the rebels at Alesia.		
51	Parthians invade Syria.		
50			Caesar refuses to disband his army, and is condemned by the Senate.
49	Caesar crosses the Rubicon, seizes Italy, captures Massilia and defeats the Pompeians in Spain at Ilerda.		Civil war between Caesar and Pompey.
48	Caesar invades Greece, is repelled at Dyrrhachium but defeats Pompey at Pharsalus and pursues him to Egypt where he wins the Alexandrine war.		
47	Caesar defeats Pharnaces at Zela, and pacifies Syria and Asia Minor.		Caesar declared dictator.

46	Caesar defeats the Pompeians at Thapsus in Africa.	<i>Leges Juliae</i> enacted.	
45	Caesar defeats the Pompeians at Munda in Spain.		
44			Caesar made dictator for life, but then assassinated.
43	Octavian defeats Antony at Mutina.		Octavian, Antony and Lepidus form the second triumvirate.
42	Antony and Octavian defeat Brutus and Cassius at Philippi.		
41–40	Octavian captures Perusia in Italy.		Antony and Octavian divide the Roman world between them.
38–36	Octavian and Agrippa fight Sextus Pompeius in Sicily, and defeat him off Naulochus.		
36	Antony unsuccessfully invades Parthia.		Lepidus forced into retirement by Octavian.
34–3	Antony campaigns in Armenia.		
32			Mauretania falls to Rome. Octavian declares war on Antony.
31	Octavian and Agrippa defeat Antony and Cleopatra at Actium.		
28		Octavian purges the Senate and holds a census.	
27		Octavian is hailed as <i>Augustus</i> and <i>Imperator</i> , thereby laying the foundations of the Principate. He creates a new administrative structure, reorganizes the provinces, and reduces the army to a full-time professional force of 28 legions plus auxiliaries, disbanding and settling over 100,000 veterans.	
26	Augustus begins the pacification of Spain.		

	MILITARY	SOCIETY	POLITICAL
25–24	Rome annexes Galatia, and Numidia and Tarraconensis become provinces; Aelius Gallus campaigns unsuccessfully in Arabia Felix.	Doors of temple of Janus closed, signifying peace for the first time in two centuries.	
23			Augustus' illness tempts rebellion but he survives the crisis.
22–20	Augustus visits Greece and Asia; Parthia is coerced into returning the standards lost at Carrhae.		
19	Agrippa ends the pacification of Spain.		
16–14	Augustus campaigns in Gaul, while Agrippa settles the east.		
13–12	Agrippa and Tiberius campaign on the Danube.		Tiberius first becomes consul.
12–9	Drusus campaigns in Germany and advances to the Elbe, but then dies.		
		Dedication of the Ara Pacis Augustae in Rome.	
8–7	Tiberius subdues the Sugambri in Germany.		
6			Tiberius retires to Rhodes.
2		Augustus is made <i>pater patriae</i> , and forms the praetorian guard.	
AD 2	Gaius Caesar parleys with the Parthian king.		
4			Gaius Caesar dies, and Augustus adopts Tiberius as his heir.
4–5	Tiberius and Germanicus campaign in Germany.		
6	Judaea made a province.	Creation of the <i>aerarium militare</i> and the office of the <i>praefectura vigilum</i> .	
6–8	Revolt in Pannonia and Illyricum gradually suppressed by Tiberius.		

9	Three legions under Varus in Germany massacred by Arminius at the Teutoburger Wald.		
10	Germanicus campaigns inconclusively against Arminius until AD 17.		
14			Augustus dies and Tiberius succeeds him. Rhine and Danube legions revolt, but are pacified by Germanicus and Drusus.
17	Revolt of Tacfarinas in Africa.		
17–19	Germanicus in the east; Cappadocia and Commagene become imperial provinces.	Jews banished from Italy.	
21	Revolt in Gaul suppressed.	Praetorian camp constructed in Rome.	
24	Tacfarinas defeated by Dolabella.		
27			Tiberius retires to Capri, while Sejanus tyrannizes Rome until executed in 31.
37			Tiberius dies and Caligula succeeds him.
39–40	Caligula campaigns ineffectually on the Rhine and the Channel coast.		
41			Caligula murdered and Claudius made emperor.
42	Mauretania organized as two provinces.		
43	Britain invaded with four legions, joined later by the emperor.		
47	Romans establish a frontier from Trent to Severn.		
51	Caratacus defeated in Wales.		
54			Claudius poisoned and succeeded by Nero.
58–61	Corbulo campaigns successfully against Parthia and Armenia.		

	MILITARY	SOCIETY	POLITICAL
61	Boudiccan revolt in Britain, narrowly defeated by Suetonius Paulinus.		
62		Fall of Seneca.	
64		Fire in Rome, and persecution of Christians.	
66	Tiridates crowned king of Armenia by Nero; revolt against Florus in Judaea.	Nero travels to Greece.	
67	Vespasian campaigns in Judaea and takes Jotapata.		
68	Vespasian attacks Jerusalem; rebellion of Vindex in Gaul suppressed.		Nero commits suicide, sparking the Year of the Four Emperors. Galba elevated by Spanish and Gallic legions.
69	Rising of Civilis on the Rhine; civil war throughout the empire.		Praetorians kill Galba and elevate Otho; Vitellius acclaimed by the German legions, and defeats Otho at Bedriacum; Vespasian takes power in the east and on the Danube, and his legions defeat Vitellius at Cremona.
70	Civilis defeated by Petilius Cerialis. Titus assaults and captures Jerusalem.		Vespasian takes power in Rome.
71		Triumph of Titus, and Temple of Janus closed.	
73	Romans capture Masada.		
78	Agricola conquers Wales and Brigantia.		
79	Agricola campaigns in Scotland.	Eruption of Vesuvius. Fire in Rome, followed by plague.	Vespasian dies and Titus succeeds him.
80		Colosseum completed.	
81			Titus dies and is succeeded by Domitian.
83	Agricola defeats Calgacus at Mons Graupius; Domitian attacks the Chatti, and establishes a new frontier between Rhine and Danube.		

85–6	Dacians invade Moesia, and defeat Roman armies.		
88	Dacians defeated at Tapae, but Domitian agrees a compromise peace.		Rebellion of Saturninus in Germany.
89–96	Domitian campaigns on the Danube (92).	Terror in Rome.	
96			Domitian is assassinated, and succeeded by Nerva.
97		Custom revived of imperial adoption of a chosen successor.	Unsuccessful revolt by the praetorian guard.
98	Trajan campaigns on the Rhine.		Nerva dies, and is succeeded by Trajan.
101–2	Trajan invades Dacia and forces Decebalus to surrender.		
105–6	Dacians rebel, but Trajan invades with ten legions and makes Dacia a province.		
106?	Rome annexes Arabia Petraea.		
111		Pliny the younger sent to govern Bithynia.	
114–16	Trajan conducts campaign of conquest in the east, creating new provinces and capturing Ctesiphon.		
115–17	Revolts break out in many parts of the empire, often begun by Jews of the <i>diaspora</i> .		Trajan dies (117), and is succeeded by Hadrian.
118–20	Hadrian halts the expansionist policy, and withdraws behind the Euphrates.		
121–30	Hadrian's Wall built between Tyne and Solway.	Hadrian travels throughout the empire, prompting reforms and public works.	
132–5	Jewish revolt led by Bar-Kochba, finally suppressed with the expulsion of Jews from Judaea (now renamed Syria Palaestina).		
135?	Arrian defends Cappadocia against the Alans.		

	MILITARY	SOCIETY	POLITICAL
138			Hadrian dies, and is succeeded by Antoninus.
141–3	Lollius Urbicus conquers lowland Scotland and constructs a new frontier between Forth and Clyde.		
145–52	Suppression of uprisings in Mauretania.		
mid–150s	Brigantes revolt in Britain.		
157–9	Dacian unrest put down, and Dacia divided into three provinces.		
161		Marcus sets a precedent by sharing power with Lucius Verus.	Antoninus dies, and is succeeded by Marcus Aurelius
162–6	Parthia invades Armenia, but it is repelled and Seleucia and Ctesiphon are taken. Revolts in Britain and Germany.		
167–9	Marcomanni and others cross the Danube and besiege Aquileia; Marcus and Verus beat them back.	Plague is brought back from the east, and ravages the empire.	Lucius Verus dies (169).
170–5	Marcus campaigns successfully against the Marcomanni, Quadi and Iazyges on the Danube.		
175			Cassius rebels unsuccessfully in Syria.
178–80	Marcus and Commodus campaign again on the Danube.		Marcus dies (180), and Commodus succeeds him.
181–91	Unrest in Britain, Germany and Africa suppressed.	Commodus disports himself in gladiatorial shows.	
192–3		Praetorian guard reorganized by Severus after putting the throne up for auction.	Commodus is murdered, as are Pertinax and Didius Julianus who follow him; Septimius Severus, the commander in Pannonia, takes power.

194	Civil war.		Severus defeats his eastern rival Niger at Issus, while placating Albinus in Britain with the title of <i>Caesar</i> .
195–6	Severus captures Byzantium and defeats the Parthians.		
197	Denuded British frontier overrun, but the invasion repelled by Virius Lupus.		Severus defeats Albinus at Lyons.
197–9	Severus renews his Parthian war and destroys Ctesiphon.	Severus' sons Caracalla and Geta made <i>Augustus</i> and <i>Caesar</i> .	
199–204		Severus visits Egypt and Africa, and appeases the army by increasing pay and allowing soldiers to marry.	
208–10	Severus campaigns in Scotland.		
211–12			Severus dies in York; Caracalla kills Geta and becomes sole emperor.
213–14	Caracalla campaigns against the Alamanni on the Rhine.		
215–16	Caracalla invades Parthia.		
217			Caracalla is murdered by his troops, and replaced by Macrinus.
218			Macrinus is killed by Julia Maesa in favour of her grandson Elagabalus.
222			Elagabalus is murdered and replaced by Severus Alexander.
224–7		Parthia is overthrown by the Sasanid Persian dynasty of Ardashir.	
230–3	Ardashir invades Mesopotamia, and Alexander campaigns against him.		
234–5	Alamanni and Marcomanni cross the Rhine and Danube; Alexander confronts them but has to buy them off.		

	MILITARY	SOCIETY	POLITICAL
226			
235	Ardashir overthrows Parthian dynasty.		Alexander killed by his mutinous troops, and replaced by Maximinus.
235	Murder of Severus Alexander by troops.		Accession of Maximinus the Thracian.
238	Persians attack eastern frontier.		Revolts against Maximinus; accession of Gordian.
241			Death of Ardashir; succession of Shapur I.
243/4	Gordian defeated by Shapur I of Persia.		
249/50	Goths raid Balkans.		
251	Death of Decius in battle against Goths.		
259-73			Separate empire in Gaul under Postumus and successors.
260	Defeat and capture of Valerian by Persians.		
	Franks invade Gaul; Alamanni invade Italy; revolts in Balkans.		
261-8	Odaenathus of Palmyra takes control of eastern provinces.	260s Senators cease to be appointed to military commands.	
262-7	Goths invade Asia Minor.		
267	Goths sack Athens.		Zenobia succeeds murdered Odaenathus.
270			Accession of Aurelian.
271	Romans withdraw from Dacia.		
	Circuit of walls for Rome.		
272	Aurelian defeats Palmyra.		
273	Aurelian reconquers Gaul.		
275			Murder of Aurelian.
284			Accession of Diocletian.

293			Tetrarchy with Maximian as co-Augustus and Constantius and Galerius as Caesars.
290s		Reorganization of frontier commands to separate military duties, performed by dukes (<i>duces</i>) from civilian administration; overhaul of tax system and coinage.	
301		Edict on Maximum Prices issued in response to complaints from troops.	
290s–320s		Development of new imperial guard, the <i>scholae</i> , under command of master of offices (<i>magister officiorum</i>).	
305			Abdication of Diocletian and Maximian.
312	Constantine captures Rome after battle of Milvian Bridge.	310s Creation of stable gold currency, the <i>solidus</i> ; introduction of 15-year indiction cycle of tax assessment.	Constantine adopts Christianity.
324	Constantine defeats Licinius and becomes sole emperor.	310s–320s Emergence of field armies of <i>comitatenses</i> , under command of master of infantry (<i>magister peditum</i>) and master of horse (<i>magister equitum</i>).	
328		Foundation of Constantinople.	
330s		Creation of regional praetorian prefectures.	
337	Constantine launches campaign against Shapur of Persia.	Provision of field army for each division of empire; emergence of regional field armies, first in east and Illyricum.	Death of Constantine and division of empire between three sons.
344	Constantius fights inconclusive battle of Singara against Persians.		
350	Third siege of Nisibis by Shapur.		Usurpation of Magnentius in Gaul; death of Constans.
353	Constantius II defeats Magnentius at Mursa and reunifies empire.		

	MILITARY	SOCIETY	POLITICAL
355			Julian co-opted by Constantius as Caesar.
357	Julian defeats Alamanni at Strasbourg.		
359	Shapur captures Amida.		
360			Troops at Paris acclaim Julian as Augustus.
361	Julian marches east against Constantius.		Death of Constantius.
363	Julian invades Persia; Jovian surrenders territory in return for peace with Persia		Death of Julian in Mesopotamia.
376	Goths seek to cross Danube to escape from Huns.	370s Probable date for composition of anonymous <i>De rebus bellicis</i> . Overhaul of recruitment system to place burden on consortia of property-owners.	
378	Goths defeat and kill Valens at Adrianople.		
382	Theodosius settles Goths in Balkans as federates.		
383		380s Probable date for composition of Vegetius' <i>Epitome of Military Science</i> .	Magnus Maximus overthrows Gratian in Gaul and drives Valentinian II from Italy.
388	Theodosius defeats Magnus Maximus.		
392			Arbogast proclaims Eugenius emperor in west.
394	Theodosius defeats Eugenius and reunifies empire.		
395			Death of Theodosius; empire divided between Arcadius and Honorius.
396	Alaric and Gothic war band ravage Greece.		
400	Gainas and Gothic followers driven from Constantinople.	Compilation of <i>Notitia Dignitatum</i> .	
406	Vandals, Alans and Sueves cross Rhine frontier.		
408	Alaric enters Italy.		Death of Stilicho.

410	Sack of Rome by Alaric and Visigoths.		
418	Establishment of Visigoths in Aquitania.		
429	Vandals cross into Africa.		
439	Vandals capture Carthage.		
440s	Attila's Huns overrun Balkans.		
451	Attila invades Gaul; defeated at Catalaunian Plains.		
453			Death of Attila.
455	Vandals sack Rome.		
460	Failure of Majorian's expedition to recover Africa.		
468	Eastern expedition under Basiliscus fails to recover Africa.	460s-470s	Introduction of new element of imperial guard at Constantinople, the <i>excubitores</i> , under the command of a count.
476			Odoacer deposes Romulus Augustulus, last western emperor.
480s	Goths overrun much of northern Balkans.		
489	Theoderic the Amal leads Goths from Balkans to Italy.		
493	Theoderic captures Ravenna and kills Odoacer.		Start of Ostrogothic kingdom.
497	Suppression of Isaurian revolt.		
502	Kavadh invades eastern provinces and captures Amida.		
505	Truce on eastern frontier; Anastasius initiates construction of Dara.		
507	Clovis and Franks defeat Visigoths at Vouillé.		

	MILITARY	SOCIETY	POLITICAL
527	Renewed warfare in east.	Justinian creates separate command for Armenia.	Accession of Justinian.
530	Belisarius defeats Persians outside Dara.		
531	Belisarius defeated at Callinicum.		
532	Endless Peace with Persia.		Nika riot at Constantinople.
533	Belisarius defeats Vandals and recovers Africa.	530s Suspension of quinquennial donatives.	
536	Belisarius lands in Italy, captures Rome.		
540	Belisarius enters Ravenna. Khusro I invades eastern provinces and captures Antioch.		End of Ostrogothic kingdom.
542			Arrival of bubonic plague.
544	Belisarius' second expedition to Italy.		540s Emergence of separate Monophysite Church hierarchy in east.
546	Totila recaptures Rome.		
552	Narses defeats and kills Totila at Busta Gallorum.		
562	Fifty Years' Peace with Persia.		
565			Death of Justinian.
568	Lombards invade Italy.		
572	Justin II launches new war on eastern frontier.		
578/9	Avar invasions of Balkans start.		
586/7	Slav raids reach Athens and Corinth.		

591	Romans restore Khusro II to Persian throne; peace with Persia.	
590s	Restoration of Roman authority in Balkans.	Compilation of <i>Strategicon</i> of Maurice.
602	Revolt of Balkan army and overthrow of Maurice. Khusro II invades east.	
610	Heraclius captures Constantinople and kills Phocas.	
614	Persians capture Jerusalem.	
622		Muhammad leaves Medina (Hijra).
626	Avar siege of Constantinople.	
627	Heraclius defeats Persians at Nineveh.	
632		Death of Muhammad.
636	Arabs defeat Romans at River Yarmuk.	
638	Arabs capture Jerusalem.	
639	Arabs attack Egypt.	
642	Arabs capture Alexandria.	
651		Death of Yazdgard III, last Sasanid ruler.

GLOSSARY

- actuarius** quartermaster.
- aerarium militare** the military treasury established by Augustus to pay the discharge bonuses for veterans.
- ager publicus** Roman public land in Italy under the Republic.
- agri deserti** deserted lands.
- ala/alae** 'wing(s)', the term used for Italian allied formation(s) in the mid-Republic, or for cavalry unit(s) in the Principate.
- amicitia** 'association', a relation of mutual obligation between peers.
- ango** Germanic heavy javelin.
- annona** 'corn supply', especially for the city of Rome or the military; also ration allowance.
- annona militaris** a tax in kind, used from the third century AD to support the army.
- antesignani** 'before the standards', troops who fought in the front ranks of a legion; these seem to have equated to the *hastati* and *velites* of the mid-Republican era, and formed a swifter and more lightly equipped group within the cohort legion.
- aquilifer** 'eagle bearer', who carried the main legionary standard.
- arcuballista** type of cross-bow.
- armatura** military training regime.
- as** a copper coin, originally one pound, but later reduced considerably in weight.
- aurum coronarium** 'gift' of gold from senators and *curiales* at imperial accessions and important anniversaries.
- aurum tironicum** tax payment in lieu of military recruit.
- auxilia** troops provided by Rome's allies (*socii*).
- auxilia palatina** military units attached to the emperor.
- bacaudae** rural brigands.
- ballista/ballistae** stone-throwing artillery piece(s), often synonymous with *catapulta*.
- bandon** military unit.
- barritus** late Roman war-cry, originally Germanic.
- beneficia** benefits, rewards.

- beneficiarius/beneficarii*** 'orderly', a soldier on the office staff of a military unit or governor; soldiers entrusted with special duties.
- bireme*** 'two-oared', a galley with two banks of oars.
- bucellarii*** 'biscuit men', personal retainers of leading officers.
- burgarii*** frontier, or local, troops.
- caligae*** military sandals.
- canabae*** civilian settlements which developed near camps.
- candidati*** élite group of forty selected from the *scholae*.
- capite censi*** 'head counted', the class of Roman citizens with too little or no property to qualify for inclusion in the Roman census classes; enlisted into the legions by Marius.
- capitula*** groups of landowners for taxation purposes.
- caput/capita*** taxation unit(s) comprising humans or animals.
- carroballistae*** artillery pieces mounted on wagons.
- castra*** military encampment or barracks.
- cataphracti*** cavalrymen with full armour for both man and horse.
- catapulta*** torsion-driven artillery piece, especially for shooting bolts.
- centuria*** the smallest unit of the Roman army, notionally (and perhaps originally) consisting of a hundred men led by a *centurio*, but normally (and later) consisting of some sixty to eighty men.
- centurion*** officer in charge of a century.
- chrysargyron*** 'gold and silver' tax paid by merchants and craftsmen.
- cingulum*** military belt.
- circus factions*** organized groups of supporters of chariot-racing teams.
- classis/classes*** fleet(s).
- clibanarius*** 'boilerman', an evocative term for a heavily armoured cavalryman.
- client kingdom*** modern term for a buffer state on the fringes of Roman territory, whose ruler accepted Roman patronage and influence as a *rex sociusque et amicus*.
- clientela*** collective term for an individual's clients.
- coemptio*** compulsory purchase of food.
- cognomina*** names assumed by generals, and later emperors, to commemorate victories.
- cohort*** Roman infantry unit usually formed of six centuries, which superseded the mid-Republican manipular organization of the legion, and which was also used by auxiliary infantry.
- collatio lustralis*** same as *chrysargyron*.
- colonia/coloniae*** Roman colony.
- comes/comites*** count(s).
- comes domesticorum*** commander of palace guard.
- comes excubitorum*** commander of the excubitors.
- comes foederatorum*** commander of federate troops.

- comes opsikion** commander of central field army in seventh century.
- comes sacrarum largitionum** Count of the Sacred Largesses, senior finance officer.
- comitatenses** companions, troops in close attendance on emperor.
- comitiva/comitivae** status of *comes* (count).
- commilitio/commitiones** fellow soldier(s).
- conductores** contractors, businessmen.
- consilium** advisory council, and in particular the imperial advisory council.
- consistorium** imperial advisory council in later Empire.
- consul** one of the two chief annual magistrates of the Roman Republic, continuing under the Principate in an attenuated fashion.
- contubernium** the small group of soldiers who shared the same tent or barrack room.
- contus** lance.
- conubium** right to marry, the legitimization on discharge of informal unions adopted by soldiers during their service, from the mid-first century AD
- corona** 'crown', the most prestigious decoration for soldiers' bravery, with several sub-types for specific circumstances.
- cuneus** 'wedge', a tactical formation employed by Roman units and commonly used by cavalry in aggression; also used to describe a unit of irregular troops.
- curiales/curial class** élite of provincial cities who served on local councils.
- cursores** cavalry deployed in loose attack formation.
- cursus clabularis** heavy-wagon part of *cursus publicus*.
- cursus publicus** imperial public transport system.
- cursus velox** fast *cursus publicus*.
- damnatio memoriae** 'retrospective condemnation', a formal process by the Senate to erase the memory of unpopular individuals after their demise.
- decimation** the most serious collective punishment for Roman units, nominally involving the execution of every tenth man.
- decurion** commander of a cavalry *turma*, similar in rank to an infantry centurion.
- dediticii** surrendered enemies, often used for recruits.
- defensores** cavalry deployed in close array to support *cursores*.
- denarius** silver coin, equal in value to 10 (later 16) *asses*.
- Deus nobiscum** 'God be with us.'
- diplomata** modern term for the bronze tablets recording grants of citizenship and *conubium* to discharged soldiers.

- dolabra** the ubiquitous entrenching tool, which Corbulo described as a more important military asset for the Romans than the sword.
- domestici** bodyguards, often imperial.
- dona militaria** military awards, the most prestigious of which were *coronae*.
- donative** monetary gift to soldiers at accessions and important anniversaries.
- dromon** principal decked warship in late Roman navies.
- drungus** flexible cavalry formation in late Roman army.
- duplicarius** 'double paid', one of the junior officers (*principales*) below the level of centurion or decurion.
- dux/duces** title used from the third century AD to describe equestrian commander(s) of vexillation(s), and later for the military commander(s) of entire frontier areas.
- eagle** the principal legionary standard, which Pliny says became the sole standard of the entire legion under Marius.
- equestrian** the old 'knightly' class, a wealth-based order second only to the senatorial order in prestige, and which provided military commanders as part of the *militia equestris*.
- equitatae** epithet for an auxiliary cohort containing a mixed force of infantry and cavalry.
- equites** 'horsemen', a general term for cavalry and a specific term for a member of the equestrian order.
- equites singulares** the cavalry guard maintained by emperors and provincial governors from the first century AD.
- excubitores** unit of imperial guard.
- expedita** 'unencumbered', a force travelling light and with limited baggage.
- exploratores** 'scouts'.
- fabrica** 'workshop', perhaps within a fort or fortress.
- fabricae** arms factories owned by the state.
- falx** Dacian weapon, like a scythe or billhook.
- federates (foederati)** allies bound to the empire by a specific treaty (*foedus*).
- fetiales** group of priests in Roman Republic with special responsibility for declaring war.
- fides** trust, good faith.
- fiscus** imperial treasury.
- follis/folles** unit(s) of base-metal currency in late empire, literally 'bag'.
- fort** fortified base of an auxiliary cohort or *ala*.
- fortress** fortified base of one or more legions.
- fulcum** late Roman term for *testudo*.
- gens** Roman extended family group, clan.

- gentiles** foreigners settled in Roman territory.
- gladius** characteristic short sword of the Roman legions.
- bastati** 'spearmen', the first line of the mid-Republican legionary heavy infantry, equipped (despite the name) with *pila*.
- hippica gymnasia** 'cavalry games', the mounted military exercises described by Arrian.
- immunes** the lowest non-commissioned ranks of the Roman army, bringing exemption from fatigues but no extra pay.
- imperium** the formal power of military command in Rome; the power and authority of Republican magistrates and later of the emperors themselves.
- iugum/iuga** taxation unit of land.
- katalogoi** units of field army in sixth century.
- kontos** long cavalry lance.
- Kyrie eleison** 'God have Mercy'; military chant.
- laeti** term for groups of defeated peoples settled in parts of Gaul (also a unit in the Roman army).
- lancea/lonche** lance.
- lanciarrii** legionaries from the third century AD, equipped with the lancea (light spear) instead of the *pilum*.
- latifundia** extended estates, a term used mainly in Italy and Sicily.
- latrones** bandits or pirates, also termed *leistai*.
- legatus** 'legate', senatorial officer used from the second century BC to support senior magistrates and to exercise semi-independent commands like that of a legion; employed also by the emperors in this capacity, and to govern imperial provinces as *legati Augusti propraetore*.
- legion** standard unit of Roman citizen troops (mainly heavy infantry), nominally containing around 5,000 men.
- levis armatura** 'light armed'.
- liburnian** light, fast war galley, probably with two banks of oars.
- limes/limites** frontier(s) or frontier region(s).
- limitanei** frontier troops in late Empire
- lorica** corselet of mail, scale, or steel plates.
- magister equitum** master of cavalry.
- magister militum** master of soldiers.
- magister officiorum** master of offices, senior civilian official with responsibilities including, at different times, palace guards, arms factories, interpreters and much of the imperial secretariat.
- magister peditum** master of infantry.
- maiestas** *lèse-majesté*, especially the law revived by Sulla restricting the conduct and movement of provincial governors.
- mandata** official instructions, especially those given to provincial governors.

- maniple** 'handful', a unit composed of two centuries, which was the main formation of the mid-Republican legion until superseded by the cohort
- mansio/mansiones** posting station(s) on *cursus publicus*.
- manuballista** type of cross-bow.
- mattiobarbuli** lead-weighted darts.
- metope** square space between triglyphs in a Doric frieze.
- miles** soldier.
- militia** military service.
- militia equestris** equestrian career, involving prefectures and tribunates in auxiliary or legionary units, and culminating in a senior post such as a procuratorship.
- milliaria** epithet for an unusually large auxiliary cohort or *ala*, nominally containing around 800 men.
- missorium** large serving dish, often of precious metal, used as important gift
- naumachia** naval warfare.
- novella** law (literally 'new one') issued to supplement an existing collection.
- numeri** irregular formations which appear in the first century AD alongside regular auxiliary units.
- numerus** unit of soldiers in late Roman army.
- officium** office staff of a legion or governor.
- oikonomos** administrator, often financial.
- oikoumenê** world, or inhabited or civilized part of world.
- onager** torsion-powered artillery piece, literally 'wild ass'.
- opinator** quartermaster.
- oppidum** Celtic fortified town.
- optio** junior officer who acted as deputy to a centurion.
- ostraca** potsherds
- parmula** small round shield carried by *velites*.
- pax deorum** peace of the gods, divine favour.
- peditatae** epithet for an auxiliary cohort composed entirely of infantry.
- perfectissimus** senior rank in civilian hierarchy.
- periplous/periploi** account(s) of places passed on sea voyage.
- phalanx** Greek infantry formation of close-packed spearmen or pikemen.
- philanthropia** generosity, love of mankind, a standard imperial virtue.
- pilani** another term for the *triarii*.
- pilum** the characteristic javelin of the Roman legion, with its long, thin iron head.
- plumbatae** lead-weighted darts.
- pomerium** city limits, especially of Rome.

- popularis/populares** popular or populist politician(s).
- praefectus** 'prefect', equestrian commander of an auxiliary unit.
- praefectus castrorum** 'camp prefect', an equestrian ex-centurion who would command a legion in the legate's absence.
- praetor** a Republican magistrate used especially to govern provinces and to administer justice in Rome, the latter function continuing under the Principate.
- primus pilus** the senior centurion of a legion.
- principales** junior officers, below centurions or decurions but above *immunes*; also leading men in general.
- principes** the second heavy infantry line of the manipular legion.
- proconsul** originally a consul whose *imperium* was extended beyond his year of office; later anyone holding a post of that rank.
- procurator** a senior official (usually equestrian) employed by the emperor for civil administration such as provincial tax collection.
- promoti (equites)** units of cavalry formed from existing units in third and fourth centuries.
- protector/protectores** 'guardian(s)', staff officer(s) from the third century AD selected for high command.
- province/provincia** originally the sphere in which a Roman magistrate was to exercise his *imperium*, later more specifically the administrative sub-divisions of Roman territory.
- publicani** private contractors hired by the Roman state to perform duties such as collecting taxes and supplying the army.
- quadrirème** 'four-oared', a large war galley with some combination of multiple rowers per oar and multiple oar banks totalling four per bay.
- quaestor** junior Roman magistracy commonly held in one's late 20s, often supporting more senior magistrates; in late Empire, official in palace with legal responsibilities.
- quaestor exercitus** governor of province (*quaestura*) embracing lower Danube and Aegean islands.
- quincunx** modern term for the 'chequerboard' arrangement of legionary maniples described by Livy.
- quingenaria** epithet for a normal size auxiliary cohort or *ala*, nominally containing around 500 men.
- quinquerème** 'five-oared', a large war galley with some combination of multiple rowers per oar and multiple oar banks totalling five per bay.
- riparii** frontier troops, often stationed along rivers.
- sacramentum** oath.
- sagittarii** archers.
- sagum** military cloak.
- salus** safety.

- schola/scholae*** unit(s) of imperial guard.
- scholaris/scholarius*** member of *schola*.
- scorpion*** light bolt-shooting catapult.
- scutum*** curved rectangular shield used by legionary heavy infantry.
- senatorial province*** a province, usually without a legionary garrison, governed by a proconsul rather than a *legatus Augusti propraetore*.
- sesquiplicarius*** 'one-and-a-half-paid', one of the junior officers (*principales*) below the level of centurion or decurion.
- sestertius/sestertii*** standard Roman coin in later Republic and early Empire.
- signifer*** 'standard bearer', a senior *principalis*.
- signum*** military ensign or standard, originally of a maniple.
- socius/socii*** 'ally, allies', specifically Italian communities before the extension of citizenship after the Social War.
- solidus*** standard gold coin of late Empire.
- spatha/spathae*** long slashing-sword(s) used by auxiliary cavalry and from the third century AD by legionary and auxiliary infantry.
- speculatores*** Republican scouts, and later the mounted escort for emperors.
- spiculum*** javelin.
- stationarii*** soldiers entrusted with special guard duties.
- stipendium*** the annual legionary salary, or its four quarterly instalments.
- strategicon*** treatise on military matters.
- stratelates*** general(s).
- supplication*** religious ceremony to seek divine help.
- symmachos/symmachoi*** ally/allies.
- synone*** compulsory purchase of food.
- tacticon/tactica*** treatise(s) on military matters.
- tagma*** unit in later Roman army.
- territorium*** tract of land, including that attached to camps.
- tesserarius*** junior officer of the *principales*, in charge of circulating the watchword.
- testudo*** 'tortoise', the locked shields formation used by legionaries during sieges to minimize exposure to missiles.
- themes*** territorial units of military administration introduced in mid-seventh century.
- triarii*** the third line of heavy infantry in the manipular legion, originally armed with thrusting-spears.
- tribuni militum*** the six most senior officers of a legion before the appointment of legates; they were mainly equestrians, though under the Principate one was of senatorial rank.
- tributarii*** foreign recruits provided under formal agreement.
- tributum*** Roman tax levied for military expenses.

- triplex acies*** the three-line battle formation of the manipular and later the cohort legion.
- trireme*** 'three-oared', a galley with three banks of oars.
- triumphator*** person accorded a triumph.
- turma/turmae*** cavalry squadron(s), nominally numbering thirty-two men.
- vehiculatio*** system for requisitioning transport.
- velarium*** 'curtain', or specifically the awning used to shade the Colosseum in Rome.
- velites*** light javelin men of the manipular legion, who disappeared at the start of the first century BC.
- vexillatio/vexillationes*** 'detachment(s)' of legion allocated for separate duties, an *ad hoc* unit which became more common in the Principate as legions became more firmly committed to particular regions and harder to move around *en bloc*; also unit of cavalry.
- vicarius*** vicar or deputy commander.
- vici*** small civilian settlements near camps.
- vigiles*** units established by Augustus to act as a fire brigade for Rome.
- virī militares*** 'military men', a term used for soldiers prominent in civilian contexts.
- virtus*** 'virtue', the kind of steadfast and warlike spirit in which the Romans took such pride.
- xenona*** hostel.

ANCIENT AUTHORS

- Aelian (Aelianus Tacticus)**, second century AD, a Greek resident in Rome; author of a treatise on tactics (*Tactica*), probably written in AD 106.
- Aeneas Tacticus/the Tactician**, c. 350 BC, perhaps from Stymphalus in Arcadia; author of one of the earliest Greek military manuals. Its only surviving portion (*Poliorcetica*) is variously known as *On the Defence of Fortified Positions* or *On Sieecraft* or *How to Survive under Siege*.
- Agathias**, AD 536–82, from Myrina; a poet and author of a contemporary history covering the years 552–8, a continuation of Procopius.
- Ammianus Marcellinus**, c. AD 330–400, from Antioch; author of a history of the Roman Empire. Only books 14–31, covering the years AD 354–78, survive.
- Anonymus Valesianus**, a work in two parts of which the first is a biography of Constantine composed c. AD 390, and the second a brief chronicle of the years 474–526 where Theoderic is the main focus.
- Anthologia Palatina**, an anthology of about 4,000 ancient Greek poems compiled from earlier anthologies by the Byzantine scholar Constantine Cephalas in the tenth century AD.
- Aphrahat**, fourth-century AD ascetic, resident in Persian Mesopotamia, and attributed author of twenty-three *Demonstrations*, Syriac texts which survey the Christian faith.
- Apollodorus of Damascus**, a building expert under Trajan and Hadrian, who wrote a treatise on military machinery (*Poliorcetica*).
- Appian of Alexandria**, second century AD; author of a Roman history covering the Civil Wars (*Bella civilia*) and foreign wars, arranged by geographical area (Italy, Libya, Sicily, Syria, etc.).
- Apuleius**, mid–late second century AD, from Madaura in north Africa; philosopher and rhetorician, best known for his *Apologia*, a defence against accusations of magic, and the *Golden Ass* (*Metamorphoses*), a Latin novel on a grand scale.
- Aristides, Publius Aelius**, c. AD 117–81, from Hadrianotherae in Mysia; a sophist best known for his *Oration to Rome* and *Sacred Discourses*, a detailed account of his own medical conditions and treatments.

Arrian (Flavius Arrianus Xenophon), c. AD 85–175, from Nicomedia; consul in 129 or 130, governor of Cappadocia 130/1–137/8, and author of many works, including *The Formation against the Alans* (*Acies contra Alanos*) (134/5) and *Ars tactica* (*Ektaxis*) (136/7).

Asclepiodotus, first century BC; author of a treatise on tactics.

Augustine (Aurelius Augustinus), AD 354–430, from Thagaste; bishop of Hippo in north Africa, and author of the *Confessions* (397–8), *The City of God* (*De civitate Dei*) (413–26) and numerous dogmatic works.

Augustus, 63 BC–AD 14; adopted son of Julius Caesar and first emperor of Rome (31 BC–AD 14); author of the *Res Gestae* (*Index rerum a se gestarum*).

Aurelius Victor, Sextus, an African who was governor of Pannonia Inferior in AD 361 and *praefectus urbi* in 389, and who wrote *De Caesaribus*, a biographical history of the emperors from Augustus to Constantius II.

Ausonius, Decimus Magnus, fourth-century AD rhetorician and author of learned poetry who came to prominence as tutor to the future emperor Gratian in the 360s.

Basil of Caesarea, c. AD 330–79, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, author of numerous doctrinal works and a large collection of letters

Caesar (Gaius Iulius Caesar), 100–44 BC, from Rome; general and statesman who wrote narratives of his own campaigns: the *Gallic War* (*Bellum Gallicum*) and the *Civil War* (*Bellum civile*). Accounts of the Spanish War, African War and Alexandrine War are falsely attributed to him.

Candidus, from Isauria; author of a lost history which covered the years 457–491.

Cassius Dio (Dio Cassius Cocceianus), AD 155–after 229, from Nicaea; Roman senator, provincial governor and author of a world history (*Romaika*) to AD 229 in eighty books.

Cato the Elder, Marcus Porcius, 234–149 BC; Roman statesman famous for affecting simple old-fashioned ways; author of the first history in Latin, and works on agriculture (*De agricultura*) and military matters (*De re militari*).

Celsus, Aulus Cornelius, first century AD, from Rome; author of an encyclopaedic work of which only the medical section (*De medicina*) survives, but which also covered military tactics.

Chronica minora, ‘Minor Chronicles’, the term for a collection of brief western accounts of events in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Chronicon Paschale, ‘Easter Chronicle’, a Constantinopolitan chronicle extending from the Creation to AD 628 (where the text breaks off; the original terminus was probably 630) which includes important accounts of military events in the late 620s.

Chronicle of Seert, a Syriac chronicle by a Nestorian writer which presents some useful information on east Christian perceptions of events from the fifth to the early seventh centuries AD.

Chrysostom, see **John Chrysostom**

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, 106–143 BC, from Arpinum; Roman orator, statesman and prolific author. Almost a thousand of his letters to family and friends, and in particular to his friend Atticus, survive; so do dozens of his speeches (including those against Verres and Catiline and the *Philippics* against Mark Antony) and twenty philosophical studies.

Claudian (Claudius Claudianus), *fl.* AD 400; a native of Egypt who arrived in Italy *c.* 394 where for the next decade he produced several panegyric poems for emperor Honorius and Stilicho.

Codex Iustinianus, compilation of imperial legislation instigated by Justinian, published in AD 529 with a second edition in 534.

Codex Theodosianus, compilation of imperial legislation from Constantine's reign to the present, instigated by Theodosius II and promulgated in AD 438.

Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, AD 905–59; emperor of Byzantium and scholar, who produced (or had produced in his name) several compilations of older works, including the *De legationibus* (*On Embassies*), the *De caerimoniis*, a treatise on the organization of court life at Constantinople, and treatises on military matters.

Corippus, Flavius Cresconius, sixth-century AD Latin poet from north Africa; author of an epic account of the Moorish campaigns of John Troglyta and of the accession ceremonies of emperor Justin II.

Cyril of Scythopolis (Cyrillus Scythopolitanus), sixth-century AD Greek monk from Palestine, author of the *Lives* of several Palestinian abbots, including St Saba (*Vita Sabae*).

De rebus bellicis, anonymous treatise on military matters, probably composed in the late fourth century AD, which is best known for its illustrated sequence of implausible suggestions for military innovations.

Dexippus, Publius Herennius, late third century AD; Athenian leader who organized resistance to a Gothic incursion in 267; author of a history in twelve books which ran from mythical times to 270, as well as a narrative of Gothic wars from 238 to 270; only fragments survive.

Digest (Digesta), a collection of laws and legal rulings, compiled in the sixth century AD on the orders of emperor Justinian, including much earlier material, especially from the late second-century jurists Ulpian, Paulus and Papinian.

Dio Cassius, see **Cassius Dio**

Dio Chrysostom (Dio Cocceianus), late first–early second century AD; Greek orator and philosopher from Prusa in Bithynia; a friend of Trajan and author of numerous display speeches (*Orationes*).

- Diodorus Siculus**, c. 80–20 BC, from Agyrium in Sicily; author of *The Library of History* (*Bibliothēke*), a forty-book history of the world from earliest times to the mid-first century BC, compiled from earlier sources.
- Ps.-Dionysius of Tel Mahre**; a Syriac chronicle covering world history down to AD 775, incorrectly ascribed to the ninth-century patriarch of Antioch.
- Epictetus**, mid-first–early second century AD; Stoic philosopher who was a slave at Rome before securing his freedom and establishing a school in Epirus.
- Eugippius**, c. AD 453–535; abbot of a monastery near Naples and author of the *Life of Severinus of Noricum* (*Vita Severini*).
- Eunapius**, late fourth century AD; pagan philosopher from Sardis and admirer of emperor Julian, who wrote on the *Lives of the Sophists* (*Vitae sophistarum*) and produced a historical continuation of Dexippus which extended from AD 270 to 404; only fragments survive.
- Eusebius**, c. AD 260–340; bishop of Caesarea; author of the first Christian history, a panegyric biography of Constantine and numerous theological works.
- Eutropius**, mid-fourth century AD; author of brief survey of Roman history (*Breviarium*) in ten books which covered from Romulus to the death of Jovian (364).
- Evagrius**, AD 535–c. 595; native of Epiphania in Syria who was employed as a legal advisor by Gregory, patriarch of Antioch; author of an *Ecclesiastical History* covering 430–592.
- Festus**, Italian senator who was proconsul of Asia from AD 372 to 378, and who wrote a summary of Roman history from its origins to the accession of Valens (*Breviarium rerum gestarum populi Romani*).
- Florus (Lucius Annaeus Florus)**, mid-second century AD; author of a brief account of Roman history (*Epitome bellorum omnium annorum DCC*) which tends to focus on the wars of the Republic.
- Frontinus (Sextus Julius Frontinus)**, AD 40–103, from Rome; magistrate and general whose works on the water supply of Rome and on stratagems (*Strategemata*) survive.
- Galen**, born in Pergamum in AD 129, court physician under Marcus Aurelius, and author of many works on medicine and philosophy.
- Gellius, Aulus** c. AD 130–180, probably from Rome; author of *Attic Nights* (*Noctes Atticae*), a miscellany of historical and other information in twenty books.
- George of Pisidia**, early seventh century AD; court poet at Constantinople in the 610s and 620s who produced panegyric works for emperor Heraclius and other leading figures.

George Syncellus, late eighth century AD; Palestinian monk who became cell-mate (*syncellus*) to patriarch Tarasius of Constantinople; he compiled a chronicle from the Creation to the accession of Diocletian (284), and supplied important materials for his continuator Theophanes.

Gregory of Nyssa, c. AD 330–395; brother of St Basil and bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia; defender of Nicene Christianity and author of numerous theological and spiritual works.

Gregory of Tours, AD 538–594; member of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy who became bishop of Tours in 573; author of various hagiographical collections and a *History of the Franks*.

Heliodorus, early second century AD; surgeon and author of several medical texts.

Herodian, early third century AD; author of a *History of the Empire after Marcus* which covered the years 180–238 in eight books.

Hero(n), first century AD, from Alexandria; author of a number of treatises on aspects of engineering and measurement, including the *Mechanics* and *Pneumatics*.

Hieronymus, see **Jerome**

Historia Augusta, also known as the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (SHA); the name given to a collection of imperial biographies from Hadrian to Carinus and Numerianus (AD 117–284), which, though it pretends to be composed by several third-century authors, is in fact a compilation of the late fourth century.

Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus), 65–58 BC, from Venusia; poet of the *Epodes*, *Satires*, *Odes*, *Epistulae* and *Carmen saeculare*.

Hydatius, fourth century AD; bishop of Aquae Flaviae (northern Portugal) and author of a chronicle which carries on Jerome's *Chronicle* down to 468/9.

Ps.-Hyginus; an incomplete work *On Camp Fortifications* (named *De munitionibus castrorum* in the sixteenth century), probably to be dated to the late second or early third century AD, is attributed to this otherwise unknown author.

Jerome (Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus), c. AD 340–420, from Stridon; canonized translator of the Bible into Latin and author of many theological studies, historical works (including a continuation of Eusebius' *Chronicon* and biographies of Christian writers), and letters.

Jerusalem Talmud, see *Talmud*.

John of Antioch, early seventh century AD; author of a world chronicle which reworked and extended that of Malalas; only fragments survive.

John Chrysostom, c. AD 347–407; pupil of Libanius, monk at Antioch and in 398 patriarch of Constantinople, where he fell out with the imperial

court and was exiled in 403. An exceptionally powerful orator, and author of numerous sermons and treatises.

John of Ephesus, c. AD 505–585, from Amida; titular Monophysite bishop of Ephesus under the emperor Justinian and author of hagiographies and an *Ecclesiastical History*, of which part III, covering c. 565–82, survives.

John of Epiphania, late sixth century AD; author of a history of the Persian War of 572–91, of which only a fragment from the beginning survives, although much more is preserved through the account of Theophylact Simocatta.

John Lydus (Joannes Lydus), sixth century AD; official in the office of the praetorian prefect under emperor Justinian and author of a number of works, including *On Magistracies* (*De magistratibus*) and *On the Calendar* (*De mensibus*).

John of Nikiu, seventh century AD; native of Egypt and Monophysite bishop of Nikiu; author of a chronicle which drew heavily on Malalas and John of Antioch for its earlier sections but then describes the end of Byzantine rule in Egypt and the Islamic conquest. An Ethiopic translation of an Arabic translation of the original Greek text is all that survives.

Jordanes, sixth century AD; a Goth who composed two historical works, *On the Origin and History of the Goths* (*Getica*) and *On the Origin and History of the Roman People* (*Romana*).

Josephus (Flavius Josephus), AD 37–101, from Jerusalem; author of an account of the Jewish Revolt of AD 66–73 (*The Jewish War*, *Bellum Judaicum*) and a history of the Jews until AD 66 (*Jewish Antiquities*, *Antiquitates Judaicae*) and a defence of Jewish traditions (*Against Apion*).

Ps.-Joshua Stylites, anonymous Syriac author of a contemporary history of events (*Chronicle*) in Edessa and Mesopotamia from AD 494 to 506.

Julian the 'Apostate' (Flavius Claudius Iulianus), AD 331–363; emperor 361–3; author of a collection of letters (*Epistulae*), panegyrics of his relative Constantius II, and various anti-Christian tracts.

Justinian (Flavius Petrus Sabbatius Iustinianus), c. 482–565; emperor 527–65; instigator of a major legal codification in the first decade of his reign, and thereafter responsible for numerous *Novels*.

Justinus (Marcus Iunianus Iustinus), third century AD; author of the *Philippic Histories*, a digest of Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus' *Philippic Histories*, of which only the *Epitome* survives.

Justin Martyr, c. AD 105–165, from Flavia Neapolis in Palestine; canonized Christian preacher and martyr, who published a number of works in defence of Christianity.

Juvenal (Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis), early second century AD; author of a collection of indignant satires, which include attacks on the deceased emperor Domitian and his courtiers.

Lactantius (Lucius Caelius Firmianus), c. AD 240–320; a native of north Africa who taught rhetoric at Nicomedia under Diocletian and was later tutor to Constantine's eldest son, Crispus; author of *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* (*De mortibus persecutorum*).

Libanius, AD 314–393, native of Antioch; pagan orator and teacher, whose pupils included John Chrysostom; in addition to numerous speeches, his letters also reveal the social and political workings of the Roman empire in the east.

Life of Pachomius; versions of the biography of the fourth-century AD Egyptian founder of coenobitic monasticism exist in Greek, Coptic and Arabic, with fact and legend intertwined.

Liutprand of Cremona, tenth-century bishop of Cremona, who produced an account of the embassy he undertook to Constantinople in AD 968 on behalf of the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto I.

Livy (Titus Livius), 59 BC–AD 17, from Patavium; author of *Ab urbe condita*, a 142-book history of Rome to 9 BC, of which books 1–10 and 21–45, plus summaries (*Epitomae*, *Periochae*) of the rest, survive.

Lydus, see **John Lydus**

Macrobius, Ambrosius Theodosius, praetorian prefect of Italy in AD 430 and author of, among other works, the *Saturnalia*, a series of dialogues set during the Saturnalia holiday devoted to literary, grammatical, philosophical as well as many lighter topics.

Majorian (Iulius Valerius Majorianus), western Roman emperor, AD 457–61. He set in motion a legislative programme to restore the state (*Novels of Majorian*).

Malalas, John, early–mid-sixth century AD; native of Antioch, and author of a chronicle (*Chronographia*) ranging from Adam to the death of Justinian.

Malchus, c. AD 500, of Philadelphia; author of a detailed history covering the years 473/4–491 of which only fragments survive.

Marcellinus Comes, early sixth century AD, from Illyria; author of a chronicle covering AD 379–534.

Mark the Deacon, early fifth century AD; author of the *Life of Porphyry of Gaza*.

Martial (Marcus Valerius Martialis), Spanish-born Latin poet of the later first century AD, whose work (*Liber spectaculorum*, or *Spectacula*) comments on contemporary society in Rome.

Martianus Capella (Martinianus Minneus Felix Capella), late fifth century AD from north Africa; author of an encyclopaedic work on the liberal arts, the *De nuptiis philologiae et Mercurii*.

Maurice, emperor AD 582–602; credited with authorship of the *Strategicon* which was produced during the 590s.

Menander Protector, late sixth century; author of a continuation of the history of Agathias, covering the years AD 558–82, of which only fragments survive.

Michael the Syrian, late twelfth century AD; author of a universal history in Syriac.

Miracula S. Demetrii, two books of miracles performed in the late sixth and seventh centuries AD by the patron saint of Thessalonica, especially in the defence of his city against Avar and Slav attacks.

Nazarius, Gallic orator who composed a panegyric of Constantine in AD 321 (*Pan. Lat.* 4).

Nicephorus, AD 758–828, patriarch of Constantinople who, among other works, produced a short account (the *Breviarium*) of Byzantine history covering 602–770.

Notitia Dignitatum, an official list of all Roman civil and military posts in the eastern (*oriens*) and western (*occidens*) halves of the empire, from c. AD 400.

Novels, ‘new’ laws, those issued after the promulgation of the major collections, the *Codex Theodosianus* and *Codex Iustinianus*.

Olympiodorus, early fifth century AD, from Egyptian Thebes; author of a history in twenty-two books of the period 407–25, of which only the précis by Photius survives, although his account was also used by Philostorgius, Sozomen and Zosimus.

Onasander, c. AD 50; Greek author of a military treatise, *The General*.

Optatus, bishop of Milevis (north Africa) in the late fourth century AD and author of a treatise against the Donatists, which included an appendix that preserves several important imperial letters and decrees.

Origen (Origenes Adamantius), c. AD 185–254, Alexandrian theologian who founded an important school at Caesarea in Palestine in 231; many of his theological works and biblical commentaries are lost or preserved only in fragments or translations.

Orosius, fifth century AD, from Bracara in Portugal; author of works in defence of Christian orthodoxy and of a *History against the Pagans* (*Historiarum adversus paganos libri vii*), completed in AD 418.

Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso), 43 BC–AD 17; Latin poet best known for his love poems, but also responsible for a poetical calendar of the Roman year (*Fasti*) and poems from his exile at Tomi on the Black Sea (*Epistulae ex Ponto*).

Pacatus (Latinus Pacatus Drepanius), late fourth century AD; Gallic orator who delivered a panegyric of Theodosius I during the latter’s visit to Rome in AD 389.

Panegyrici Latini (*Pan. Lat.*), the name for a collection of imperial panegyrics in Latin which, apart from Pliny the Younger’s panegyric of Trajan (c. AD 100), date from the period 290–390 and were composed by orators with Gallic connections.

Paul of Aegina, early–mid-seventh century AD physician at Alexandria; author of numerous medical works.

Paul the Deacon, late eighth century AD; author of a *History of the Lombards* from the mid-sixth century to AD 744.

Paul the Silentiary, mid-sixth-century AD poet who composed a panegyric epic in honour of the rededication of the church of Haghia Sophia at Constantinople in 562/3.

Pausanias, c. AD 175, from Asia Minor; author of a *Description of Greece*.

Pawstos of Buzand, name associated with the creation in the late fifth century AD of the *Buzandaran Patmut'iwunk' (Epic Histories)*, a history of Armenia during much of the fourth century.

Peter the Patrician, early–mid sixth century AD; long-serving Master of Offices (539–65) and frequent ambassador for Justinian; author of at least three works, a *History of the Roman Empire* which probably ended in 361, a history of the position of Master of Offices which incorporated much information on imperial ceremonies, and an account of his embassy to Persia in 561/2. None of these survives, but there are fragments of the imperial history and Constantine Porphyrogenitus drew on Peter's ceremonial material for his own work on ceremonies.

Petronius, author of the *Satyricon* which satirizes Roman society of the first century AD, possibly the same man who was a senator under Nero until his suicide in AD 66.

Philo(n), late first century BC–early first century AD; philosopher, author and leader of the Jewish community at Alexandria who conducted an embassy to emperor Gaius in AD 39/40 (*Legatio ad Gaium*).

Philostorgius, c. AD 368–440; an ecclesiastical historian from Cappadocia, whose account of the period between the Council of Nicaea (325) and the reign of Theodosius II favoured the 'neo-Arian' successors of Constantine; only fragments survive, including an extended epitome in Photius.

Philostratus, Lucius Flavius, late second century AD–240s; author of a life of the holy man Apollonius of Tyana (*Vita Apollonii*) and a collection of *Lives of the Sophists (Vitae sophistarum)*.

Photius, c. AD 810–893; patriarch of Constantinople (858–67, 878–86); a very well-read scholar, best known now for his *Bibliotheca (Library)* which records in 280 chapters information about books read by Photius of which some (e.g. Malchus, Olympiodorus) do not survive.

Pliny the Elder (C. Plinius Secundus Maior), AD 23–79, from Como; Roman official and author of an encyclopaedic work of which thirty-seven books on *Natural History* survive.

Pliny the Younger (Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus), c. AD 61–112; nephew of Pliny the Elder; a successful senatorial career culminated in the consulship in AD 100 and friendship with emperor Trajan, for whom he composed a *Panegyric (Panegyricus)*; his most important extant work

are his letters (*Epistulae*), of which book 10 deals with his provincial governorship in Bithynia (110–12).

Plutarch, c. AD 45–20, from Chaeronea; Greek author of a vast and highly influential body of work of which fifty biographies (*Parallel Lives*, *Bioi paralleloi*) and seventy-eight essays (*Moralia*) survive.

Polybius, second century BC, from Megalopolis; leading figure of the Achaean League and author of a history covering the rise of Rome, 220–146 BC, part of which survives.

Posidonius, c. 135–151 BC, from Apamea in Syria; Stoic philosopher and polymath, who taught in Rhodes. His (lost) history in fifty-two books covered the years 146–188 BC.

Priscian (Priscianus of Caesarea), fl. AD 500; author of a work on Latin grammar as well as a panegyric for emperor Anastasius.

Priscus, fifth century AD, from Panium; philosopher and author of a history in eight books, probably covering AD 433–74 of which only fragments survive.

Procopius of Caesarea, c. AD 500–565; assistant to Belisarius; author of two accounts of Justinian's reign, the eight-book *History of the Wars of Justinian* which covers campaigns in the east, north Africa and Italy down to 554 and the extremely hostile *Secret History* (*Historia arcana*), as well as the panegyric *Buildings*.

Procopius of Gaza, c. AD 465–528; a prolific orator whose speeches included a panegyric to emperor Anastasius.

Propertius (Sextus Propertius), late first century BC; Latin love poet.

Prosper of Aquitaine (Prosper Tiro), c. AD 390–455; author of a *Chronicle* which relied on Jerome's translation of Eusebius and then Sulpicius Severus as far as AD 417, who then extended this first to 443 and subsequently to 455.

Ps.-Dionysius, see **Dionysius**.

Ps.-Hyginus, see **Hyginus**.

Res Gestae, account in Greek and Latin of the achievements of Augustus, inscribed on his mausoleum at Rome and various public buildings in the provinces.

Sallust (Gaius Sallustius Crispus), 86–34 BC, from Amiternum; author of the extant *Catilinarian Conspiracy* (*Bellum Catilinae*) and *Jugurthine Wars* (*Bellum Iugurthinum*), and a *History* of the years 78–67 BC, of which only fragments survive.

Salvian (Salvianus), c. AD 400–480, from near Trier; best known as author of the *De gubernatore dei* which contrasted barbarian virtue with Roman decadence.

Scriptores Historiae Augustae (SHA), see *Historia Augusta*.

Sebeos, late seventh century AD; Sebeos is the name traditionally attached to a history of Armenia which focuses on the period between the mid-sixth and mid-seventh centuries.

- Seneca (Lucius Annaeus Seneca)**, 4 BC–AD 65, from Corduba; Stoic philosopher, magistrate and tutor to Nero who wrote many works, including a treatise on ‘favours’ (*De beneficiis*) and *Epigrammata super exilio*.
- Servius (Marius Servius Honoratus)**, fourth century AD; grammarian and commentator, best known for his commentary on Virgil.
- Sidonius Apollinaris (Gaius Sollius Modestus Apollinaris Sidonius)**, early fifth century AD, from Lyons; aristocratic bishop of Clermont and author of collections of panegyric poems and letters.
- Socrates**, c. AD 380–450; native of Constantinople who composed a Church history (*Historia ecclesiastica*) covering the period between the Council of Nicaea (325) and the reign of Theodosius II.
- Sozomen**, early-mid fifth century AD; author of a Church history covering the period between the Council of Nicaea (325) and the reign of Theodosius II, which drew heavily on the work of Socrates.
- Strabo**, c. 63 BC–AD 23, from Amasia in Pontus; author of a lost *History* and of the *Geography*, a description of the known world, with historical digressions.
- Suda**, a lexicon compiled in the tenth century AD, which includes many citations from earlier writers. Sometimes referred to as Suidas, on the incorrect assumption that this was the author’s name.
- Suetonius (Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus)**, c. AD 70–130; author of a collection of twelve imperial biographies from Caesar to Domitian.
- Sulpicius Severus**, c. AD 360–430, from Aquitania; an advocate turned ascetic who composed a *Chronicle* which extended from the Creation to AD 400, and a biography and other works relating to his ascetic mentor, Martin of Tours (*Vita Martini*).
- Symmachus, Quintus Aurelius**, c. AD 340–402; Roman senator, orator and letter writer whose works reveal aspects of the life of the pagan élite of Rome in the late fourth century and their links with successive western imperial courts.
- Synesius of Cyrene**, c. AD 370–413; bishop of Ptolemais in Libya; author of letters, hymns, and two rhetorical ‘pamphlets’, *De regno* (*On Rulership*) and *De providentia*, which reveal views of imperial politics under emperor Arcadius.
- Syrianus Magister (Anon.)**, a sixth-century AD author responsible for works on strategy (*Peri strategikes*), naval warfare (*Naumachica*), and military rhetoric (*Rhetorica militaris*).
- Tabari (Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari)**, c. AD 840–923, a universal historian whose major work stretching from the Creation to the ninth century contains much information from Sasanid sources on Persian dealings with Rome as well as an account of the Islamic conquests.
- Tacitus (Publius or Gaius Cornelius Tacitus)**, c. AD 55–120, from Gaul; senator, consul and provincial governor, author of monographs on

Germany (*De origine et situ Germanorum*) and the campaigns of his father-in-law Agricola (*De vita Iulii Agricolae*), the *Histories* (of which only the section covering AD 68–70 survives), and the *Annals* covering the years AD 14–68, three-quarters of which survive.

Talmud, Jerusalem, one of several collections of Jewish legal opinions and stories; the *Jerusalem Talmud* was compiled in Palestine in the early fifth century AD.

Tertullian, Quintus Septimius Florens, c. AD 160–225; a well-educated convert to Christianity who wrote prolifically and polemically on theological and apologetic matters.

Tha'alabi (Abu Mansur al-Tha'alabi), late tenth–early eleventh century AD.

Themistius, c. AD 317–388; Greek philosopher and orator whose compositions include panegyrical speeches (*Orationes*) for eastern rulers between Constantius II and Theodosius I.

Theodore Lector, early sixth century AD; Church historian who produced an amalgamation of the works of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, and then extended this combined account down to AD 527.

Theodore Syncellus, early seventh century AD; monk at Constantinople who composed a sermon to commemorate the repulse of the Avar attack on the city in AD 626.

Theodoret, c. AD 393–460; bishop of Cyrrhus in Syria and prominent theologian who upheld Antiochene traditions of exegesis against their Alexandrian rivals; author of a Church history which extended from the Council of Nicaea (325) to the reign of Theodosius II.

Theophanes, AD 760–818; monk in Bithynia whose *Chronographia* continued the *Chronicle* of George Syncellus to cover the years 284–813.

Theophylact Simocatta, c. AD 580s–640s, from Egypt; author of a *History* covering the reign of emperor Maurice (AD 582–602).

Ulpian (Domitius Ulpianus), late second–early third century AD; equestrian official under Septimius Severus and his successors; author of numerous commentaries and other works on Roman law.

Urbicius, late fifth–early sixth century AD; author of a military treatise (*Epitedeuma*) under emperor Anastasius.

Valerius Maximus, early first century AD; author of a collection of memorable deeds and sayings (*Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri ix*).

Varro (Marcus Terentius Varro), 116–27 BC, from Reate; polymath and voluminous author with works on Roman antiquities, grammar and agriculture.

Vegetius (Publius (Flavius) Vegetius Renatus), c. AD 400; Roman official and author of treatises on warfare (*Epitoma rei militaris*, c. 390) and veterinary medicine.

- Velleius Paterculus**, *fl.* AD 20; author of a brief history of Rome from mythological times to AD 29.
- Victor Tonnensis**, mid-sixth century AD; bishop of Tunnuna in north Africa who wrote a short chronicle which ended in AD 565/6.
- Vindolanda tablets**, writing tablets numbering several hundred discovered during excavations at the fort of Vindolanda near Hadrian's wall; all date from the period *c.* AD 90–120.
- Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro)**, 70–19 BC, from Mantua; poet of the *Eclogues* (37 BC), *Georgics* (30 BC) and the *Aeneid* (19 BC).
- Vitruvius**, first century BC, an architect and military engineer who served Caesar and who wrote a treatise on architecture (*De architectura*) and engineering addressed to Octavian.
- Xiphilinus**, a later epitomizer useful for reconstructing the work of Cassius Dio.
- Ps.-Zachariah of Mitylene**, a Syriac chronicle compiled *c.* AD 570, which incorporates Zachariah's account of Church affairs in the fifth century as well military and other secular events from the early sixth century.
- Zacharias (Zachariah)**, late fifth–early sixth century AD; author of Monophysite (anti-Chalcedonian) Church history of the mid to late fifth century which is preserved within the *Chronicle* of Ps.-Zachariah.
- Zonaras (Joannes)**, early twelfth century AD; Byzantine court official who wrote a number of theological works; author of a *Historical Epitome* in eighteen books which covered events from the Creation to AD 1118.
- Zosimus**, late fifth–early sixth century AD; pagan who wrote an account of Roman imperial history in Greek (*Historia nova*), covering the years 180 to 410.

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ABBREVIATIONS

JOURNALS

<i>AA</i>	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i>
<i>AClass</i>	<i>Acta Classica</i>
<i>ArchEph</i>	Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερίς
<i>AHB</i>	<i>The Ancient History Bulletin</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJAH</i>	<i>American Journal of Ancient History</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AKG</i>	<i>Archiv für Kulturgeschichte</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i>
<i>AncSoc</i>	<i>Ancient Society</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem and Baghdad</i>
<i>BASP</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
<i>BICS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BRGK</i>	<i>Bericht der Römisch-germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Byzantinoslavica</i>
<i>ByzF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>ByzZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
<i>ChrEg</i>	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>DUJ</i>	<i>Durham University Journal</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>G&R</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>HA</i>	<i>Helvetia Archaeologica</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>J ECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>

JÖByz	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRGZ	<i>Jahrbuch des Römisch-germanischen Zentralmuseums</i>
JRMES	<i>Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
MDAI(R)	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts: römische Abteilung</i>
MEFRA	<i>Mélanges de l'archéologie et d'histoire de l'Ecole française de Rome, Antiquité</i>
MedArch	<i>Mediterranean Archaeology</i>
MGR	<i>Miscellanea greca et romana</i>
MH	<i>Museum Helveticum</i>
NdeS	<i>Notizie degli scavi di antichità</i>
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>
PBSR	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
REA	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
REArm	<i>Revue des études arméniennes</i>
REByz	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
RH	<i>Revue historique</i>
RhM	<i>Rheinisches Museum</i>
SCI	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
TAPhA	<i>Transactions of the Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>
T&MByz	<i>Travaux et mémoires</i>
TTH	<i>Translated Texts for Historians</i>
VizVrem	<i>Vizantijskij vremennik</i>
WS	<i>Wiener Studien</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

EDITIONS AND REFERENCE WORKS

AE	<i>L'année épigraphique</i> . Paris 1922–.
BGU	<i>Berliner griechische Urkunden (Ägyptische Urkunden aus den königlichen/staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, griechische Urkunden)</i> , ed. W. Schubart et al. Berlin 1895–.
BHL	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiquae et Mediae Aetatis</i> , ed. Société des Bollandistes. Brussels 1898–1901.
BMC	British Museum Catalogue.
CAH	<i>The Cambridge Ancient History</i> , ed. J. Boardman et al. 2nd edn. Cambridge 1970–2005.
Campbell	J. B. Campbell, <i>The Roman Army 31 BC–AD 337: A Sourcebook</i> . London and New York 1994.
CFHB	<i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i> . 1967–.
ChLA	<i>Chartae Latinae Antiquiores</i> , ed. A. Bruckner et al. Basel, Dietikon-Zurich 1954–.
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> . 1862–.
CPapLat	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Latinarum</i> , ed. R. Cavenaile. Wiesbaden 1958.
CSCO	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
Dennis (1985)	<i>Three Byzantine Military Treatises</i> , ed. G. T. Dennis. Dumbarton Oaks 1985.

- DERE* *Documenti per la storia dell'esercito romano in Egitto* (Pubblicazioni dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Contributi, Serie Terza, Scienze Storiche 11), ed. S. Daris. Milan 1964.
- FGrH* *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, ed. F. Jacoby et al. Leiden 1923–.
- FHG* *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. K. and T. Müller. Paris 1848–85.
- FIRA*² *Fontes Iuris Romani Anteiusianiani*, ed. S. Riccobono et al. Rev. edn. Florence 1940–3.
- HGM* *Historici Graeci Minores*, ed. L. Dindorf. Leipzig 1870–1.
- IGLSyr.* *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, ed. L. Jalabert et al. Paris 1929–.
- IGRom.* *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes*, ed. R. Cagnat et al. Paris 1906–27.
- ILS* *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, ed. H. Dessau. Berlin 1892–16.
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- PLRE* *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, ed. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris. Cambridge 1971–92.
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- SEG* *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. 1923–.
- Sel. Pap.* *Select Papyri* (Loeb), ed. A. S. Hunt et al. London and Cambridge, Mass. 1932–42.
- W Chrest* *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyrskunde*, ed. L. Mitteis and U. Wilcken. Leipzig and Berlin 1912.

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